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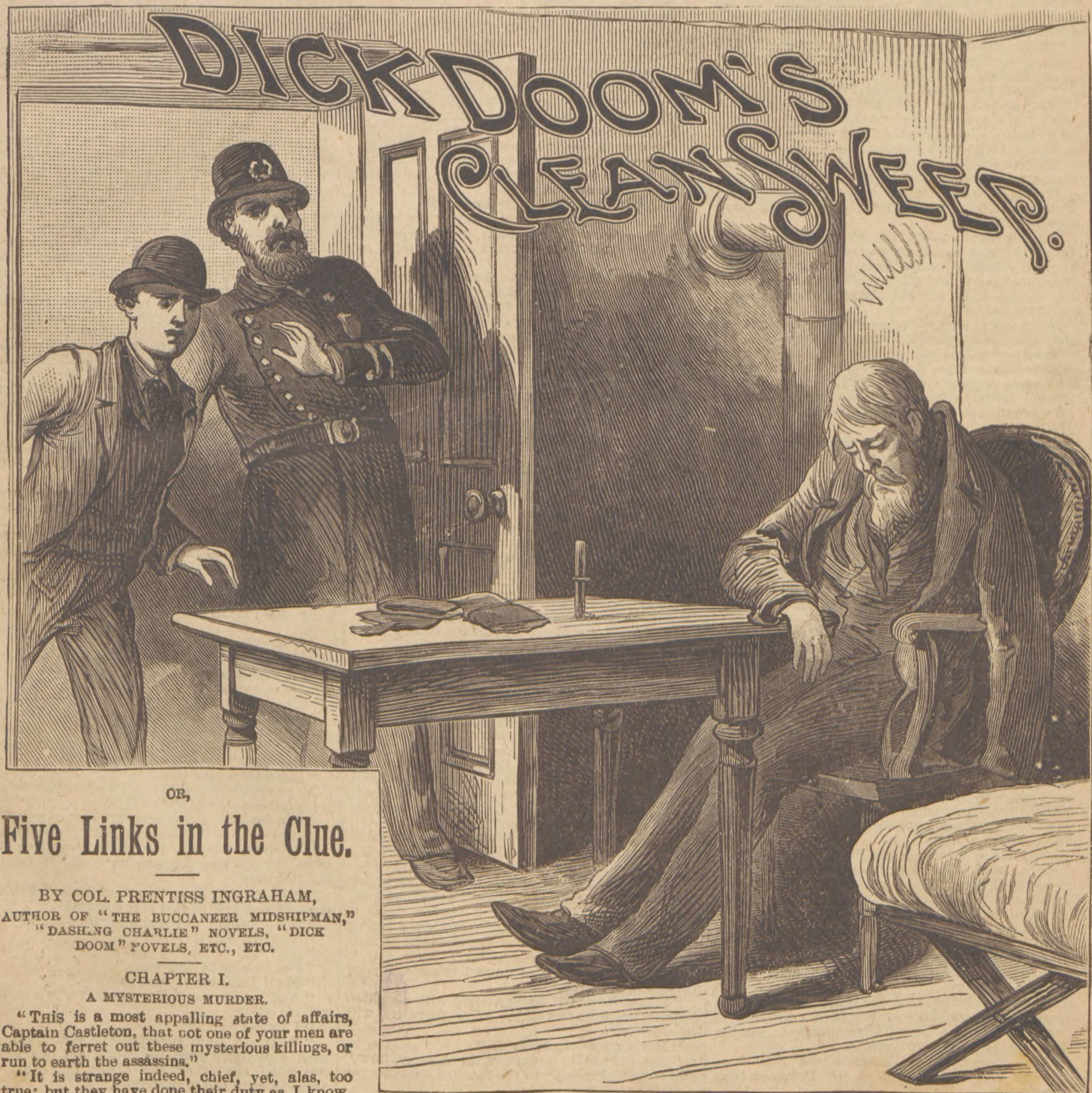
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OR,
Five Links in the Clue.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE BUCCANEER MIDSHIPMAN,"
"DASHING CHARLIE" NOVELS, "DICK
DOOM" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

"This is a most appalling state of affairs, Captain Castleton, that not one of your men are able to ferret out these mysterious killings, or run to earth the assassins."

"It is strange indeed, chief, yet, alas, too true; but they have done their duty as I know, and not even a clue can be found to the murderers."

THE DOOR WAS BROKEN OPEN, AND THERE, DEAD, IN THE LARGE ROOM WHERE HE LIVED, WAS FOUND THE HERMIT OF THE POTOMAC.

"You are aware that another murder was committed last night, Captain Castleton?"

"Another murder last night, sir?" and Captain Castleton, of the United States Secret Service Bureau at Washington, started and gazed his chief in the face with the look of a man who found it hard to believe what he heard.

"Yes, sir, the old miser, known as the Hermit of the Potomac, was killed in his home last night."

"And robbed of course, sir?"

"On the contrary he was not robbed, nor was his home, as far as can be seen, for his pocket-book was upon the table with his wallet, and nothing seemed disturbed about the premises."

"Then what was the motive of the murder, if not to rob the man, for he is said to have laid away a large fortune?"

"The safe was not broken open, and how the murderer entered is a mystery, for he left no trace of his going and coming."

"Perhaps he shot his victim through a window?"

"The blinds are solid, for the house is an old-fashioned one and stands in the midst of a two acre lot, overgrown with shrubbery, as you may know; but then the miser was killed with a knife, not by a gun-shot."

"You surprise me, chief; but I will go at once to the place and take with me picked men of my force."

"What I discover I will report to you to-night," and Captain Castleton left his chief, and with half a dozen of his best Secret Service men went to the home of the old miser who was known as the Hermit of the Potomac.

The house was an old one, built of brick and dating back nearly a century.

It was located upon a hill overlooking the Potomac River, and its grounds had once sloped down to the river.

For two-score years the house had not been inhabited, and there were many who said that it was haunted, for its former owner had been murdered there, and strange stories were told of the goings on in the old mansion a half a century before.

Then an old man had rented the place for a mere song, and there he dwelt all alone.

He was wont to pay cash for the little that he bought; he did his own cooking and washing; and when or where he made his money no one knew. He had money, that was certain, and so he was called a miser, then a hermit—the Miser Hermit.

And this was the man whom Captain Castleton, of the Secret Service, found lying dead in the old house.

A boy who took milk to him daily had received no answer to his knocks, and so had reported to a policeman.

The door was broken open, and there, dead, in the large room where he lived, was found the old Hermit of the Potomac.

A small man, with white hair and beard, apparently across the threshold of three-score years. Who had been the deadly foe to take his life?

And why had that life been taken? Not to get his gold, for all that gold, his watch, pocket-book and possessions were not disturbed.

Had the assassin been frightened away after dealing the fatal blow, before he could secure the results of his crime?

It would seem so, for, as stated, nothing had been disturbed; nothing was missed, as far as careful inspection could determine.

Not a scrap of paper told who the old Hermit was, and when an expert had opened the safe, nothing was found there save gold, silver and bank-bills, amounting to many thousands of dollars, but no documents to betray the identity of the owner.

The house was as it had been left long years before, save that the furniture showed the ravages of time. The curtains and carpets were moth-eaten; mold was upon the old paintings, and general decay rested upon all.

A stove, a cot, table, books and cupboard, with an iron safe set in the wall, were in the living-room of the Hermit, and there were some well-worn clothes and odds and ends of no value.

In the pocketbook of the miser were several hundred dollars; his watch was of considerable value and a diamond solitaire glittered upon the little finger of his left hand.

Why were not these things taken?

Why had the Hermit of the Potomac been murdered?

The Secret Service men looked at each other with the question in their eyes, but not one could give an answer. They were wholly baffled.

CHAPTER II.

AT FAULT.

"WELL, Captain Castleton, what is the result of your investigations?" asked the Secret Service chief as the captain of the District Detectives appeared before him that evening.

Captain Castleton's hair was well sprinkled with silver, showing him to be not a novice but a veteran. He had won a reputation as detective and crook-hunter second to few in the service, and, as an officer, had been brought face to face with crime in all its phases, for thirty years or more.

At the question of his chief he dropped wearily into a chair, passed his hand across his brow and said in a dejected tone:

"I acknowledge myself beaten, chief."

"That is a strange thing for you to do, Castleton."

"Strange, but true."

"You went to the Hermit's home?"

"I did, sir, to find that a policeman had broken the door in. It had been locked on the inside, and not the slightest sign was there of how the murderer entered or left the building."

"The doors were all locked, you say?"

"Yes, sir, on the inside."

"The windows?"

"Had the bolts fastened in all of them, sir."

"The cellar door?"

"Was fastened from within."

"Then the murderer must have entered the mansion along with the Hermit."

"Then how did he get out, chief?"

"That remains to be discovered."

"I examined the chimneys and went over every room in the residence, and there are twenty-seven, for it has a cellar, two stories and attic and two wings, with halls and corridors, and three stairways."

"Could it have been a suicidal act?"

"No, for the blow of the knife was in the heart, and the knife was then stuck up in the table, the blade being buried half an inch in the wood."

"Remarkable, certainly. And the body?"

"The man was seated at the table, his watch in one hand, his wallet of money in the other, and in the latter were the two keys opening the iron safe set in the wall."

"Did you take an inventory?"

"Of the things in that room, yes, sir."

"And of the money?"

"I did."

"Was there much?"

"Nine hundred dollars in the leather case, and just thirty-one thousand one hundred dollars in the safe."

"So much? You surprise me."

"Yes, sir, in gold, silver and bank bills."

"Then there were his watch, chain and a diamond ring of considerable value."

"How many men did you have with you?"

"Six, and the very best in the force."

"What was the expression upon the face of the dead?"

"One of horror."

"Ah!"

"All of my men noted that fact, sir."

"And not one could advance a theory as to the murder?"

"Save that the assassin had been frightened away before he could rob his victim—the motive of course for the murder, chief, being robbery."

"No one advanced the suicide theory?"

"It did not seem possible."

"Why impossible?"

"A man could hardly drive a knife into his heart, draw it forth, stick it into the table and then sit calmly down in an easy-chair, take his watch in one hand, his pocketbook in another and wait to breathe his last."

"It might be possible, perhaps, but not probable, Captain Castleton, but we must get the views of the doctors on that."

"The autopsy is being held now, sir, and they have orders to send their report at once to you, chief."

"Then we will soon know; but, considering the closed house, all locked from within, I lean toward the theory of suicide."

"Would not the man have left some line of his intention, sir?"

"It might be that he was seized with a sudden impulse to take his life. Was there no will found?"

"Not a scrap of paper, sir."

"Ah! here is the report of the doctors, now," and the chief took from the hand of a messenger a sealed packet.

He glanced quickly over it and said:

"They all agree that the Hermit might have taken his own life, though consider it a most

phenomenal case if he did so, as the knife was driven well into the heart, and by a straight blow."

"His vitality must have been wonderful for him to have stuck the knife up in the table, after giving himself his death wound, and then to seat himself in his easy-chair and grasp his watch and pocketbook; yet it is possible, they say."

"Then it will have to be reported as a suicide, sir, from causes unknown, and of an unknown man?"

"Yes, so report it, captain, yet I wish you to devote one month to solving the mystery of that murder or suicide and also to finding out just who the Hermit of the Potomac was."

"His name was Prevost Bassford, sir."

"That tells nothing, for it may, or may not have been his true name."

"Unweave the web of mystery, Castleton, in the month that I give you."

"I will try, sir; but if I fail?"

"You can do no more than try; but if you fail then I shall seek the services of one whom I believe never yet to have failed in unraveling a mystery."

"May I ask who that is, chief?"

"Yes, I refer to the young man Dick Doom, known as the Ferret of the Golden Fetters."

"I have heard of him as a wonder-worker," was the captain's reply, "and will be glad to have him put on the case."

CHAPTER III.

A TANGLED SKEIN.

THE death of the Hermit of the Potomac created a stir in the City of Washington, for there was a mystery unsolved regarding it, as to whether it was a murder or a suicide.

In spite of the report of the coroner that it was a suicide, there were many who leant to the belief that the old man had been murdered.

Still, if murdered, why had he not been robbed, unless the murderer had been frightened away before he had time to consummate his crime by robbery.

Then too, how had he made his ingress and egress to the house, as every door was locked, every window bolted on the inside?

Were the police right in the theory of suicide, or were they wrong? was the question which many asked each other.

Who was the man that had thus perished at night in his secluded home, either by his own hand, or by the hand of another?

That question also remained unanswered.

People drove and walked by the old mansion by hundreds, striving to solve the mystery by looking at the weird place.

Boat-loads of people on the river rested upon their oars and gazed up at the gloomy old mansion.

Persons belated at night on the road that led by it hastened on their way with dim forebodings of evil as they passed it.

But gradually the town talk of the tragedy subsided, and only the dwellers near, those who daily saw the structure, kept up their interest in it.

The month rolled by, which the Secret Service chief had given to Captain Castleton to ferret out the mystery, and no report had been made to him of a satisfactory solution other than the suicide theory.

Seated in his office one morning the chief glanced at the calendar before him and his eyes fell upon a date encircled by a red pencil-mark.

"Castleton's time is up to-day."

"I must send for him," said the chief.

As he spoke the captain of the District Detectives entered the private office.

"Ah, captain, I was just thinking of you."

"And I am here, chief, to make my report."

"Sit down and tell me what you have discovered regarding the murder of the Hermit of the Potomac?"

"Nothing, sir, more than that I am convinced now, as you are, that it was a suicide."

"But I am not so convinced, Castleton."

"You are not, sir?"

"No."

"But I thought you were."

"No, I said that it was possible."

"And you do not believe that it was a case of suicide, sir?"

"I do not."

"Well, sir, I am sure that it was, for I put men separately upon the work, not one knowing what the other was about, and every one came in with the same report."

"What was that?"

"That there was no reason to believe that it was other than a suicide."

"How long did you give each man?"
 "Ten days, sir."
 "Offer any reward for proof that it was not suicide?"
 "Yes, a reward of five hundred dollars."
 "How many men did you put on the work?"
 "Thirty-three, sir, of my force, and the police of the district were also working upon it."
 "And all reports agree?"
 "Yes, sir, all."
 "Well, did you find out who this Prevost Bassford, the old Hermit, was?"
 "It was impossible, sir."
 "You found out nothing about him?"
 "No more than that he came here with a grip-sack three years ago, found the old rookery was for rent, paid a year's rent in advance and moved in."
 "Well?"
 "He gave his name as Prevost Bassford to the agent, paid each year in advance, paid all his bills promptly, talked to no one any more than was necessary in business, and was a man of education."
 "Where he came from no one knows, or anything whatever about his antecedents."
 "Well, Castleton, I am sorry you did not discover some clue, for I had rather honor should fall upon our local Secret Service here than upon strangers."
 "Has aught been discovered, chief?" quickly asked Captain Castleton.
 "Nothing."
 "You anticipate that there will be?"
 "Well, I have become interested in the very remarkable secret work of the man of whom I spoke."
 "Dick Doom?"
 "Yes, he who is known as the Ferret of the Golden Fetters."
 "Yes, sir."
 "I know that he hunted down a most remarkable mystery in Memphis, another in New Orleans, a third on the Mississippi River, a fourth in New York, a fifth in Boston, and lately he has returned from the West, having run to earth an assassin who had made soldiers his victims and killed a number of them on their outposts in a most mysterious way."
 "This young detective, for I believe he is little more than a boy, happened in on me one day just as I had orders to send a man West to hunt down this assassin of the soldiers."
 "He went, and he was successful, and now I shall hire him to come here and take up this mystery of the death of the old Hermit of the Potomac."
 "If he succeeds he is indeed a marvel, chief," said the detective captain.

CHAPTER IV.

A RED LIST.

THE chief turned to his desk and wrote several telegrams, addressing them to the chief of police of Boston, New York and New Orleans.

Each one read as follows:

"If you know address of Detective Dick Doom send him at once to me for important work."

In a short while responses came from New York and Boston to wire the chief of police of New Orleans for Dick Doom's address.

From the New Orleans chief came the response:

"Dick Doom now in Washington, Willard's Hotel."

Captain Castleton went at once to Willard's but no such person as Dick Doom was registered there.

So the chief of police of New Orleans was again wired, and the answer came:

"Dick Doom now on the wing. Will report to you earliest moment possible."

With this reply the chief of the United States Secret Service Bureau had to be satisfied and abide his time.

"What do you expect him to do, chief, when he comes?" asked Captain Castleton.

"Solve this mystery for me."

"Is there any reward in it for him to get?"

"None visible; but there have been five murders in Washington, or rather in the city and its vicinity of late, which remain unfathomed."

"You refer to the murder of Lawyer Austin Brent in his office?"

"One!" said the chief emphatically.

"Old Uncle Abe the negro killed in his cabin not far from Arlington?"

"Two!"

"Pierre D'Arville, the French exile on his plantation down the river?"

"Three!"
 "And Major Marcus Mayo, the old army officer who was murdered in his little home just beyond the District line?"
 "Four!"
 "Then there was the old Hermit of the Potomac?"
 "Five!" said the chief with decided emphasis.
 "Well, there is a red list, I admit, chief, which can stand against us as mysteries unsolved."
 "They certainly do, and this last has set me thinking."
 "Of course there have been other murders, but they have been accounted for, the perpetrators are either in prison, hanged or to be hanged."
 "And the murderers were in each case run to earth by the police or detectives, yet here we have five murders in as many years almost, that furnish no clue to the murderers."
 "It is a red list, Captain Castleton, and should be wiped off the books by the fate of the ones who did the deeds being written opposite to the names of their victims."
 "I only wish that it could be done, chief."
 "So do I, and that is why I wish to put the Ferret of the Golden Fetters on the scent."
 "If he fails, then the crimes must be set down as a dead letter."
 "I confess to the greatest interest in seeing this remarkable young Secret Service man."
 "Well, he is in appearance little like one you would suspect of being such a renowned detective."
 "He is of slender form, about the medium height, graceful in his movements, has a face that one would say was effeminate, without regarding it very closely, and he is really too handsome for a man, with eyes, teeth and a complexion that a woman would be proud to possess."
 "His manners are refined, his voice strangely low, and he has the look of one who has a history, one who has known much of sorrow in his life."
 "He dresses elegantly, perhaps a little too much like a dandy, but the man is there, and his record shows that he will dare any danger, has faced death many times, and can kill when need be, while he is an athlete and a dead-shot as well."
 "I only hope that he may come soon, and to prepare for him, I will study up the five murders unaccounted for in the last seven years in this vicinity, for I shall set him to work to unravel them all."

CHAPTER V.

NUMBER ONE.

LAWYER AUSTIN BRENT was an attorney bending with the weight of years.

His practice was not large, yet his income enabled him to live in a grand house, and he spent money lavishly.

Lawyer Brent was a bachelor, and it was said by those who knew something of his past life that he had "loved and lost," and hence had never married.

He was wont to visit the courts when there were criminal trials going on, to go to his office daily, driving there in his carriage even on a Sunday, and yet would never remain long at a time.

He had no partner, kept no clerk, attending to all of his legal duties himself.

Some said that he was the attorney for rich estates in his keeping, but of his practice he never spoke to any one, and he had no intimates.

One day, and it was on a Sunday, Lawyer Brent, as was his wont, was in his office.

There were three rooms, on the second floor of a building which had once been a private residence, but the crowding of business in that quarter had driven the residents to a more desirable locality.

The rooms were elegantly furnished, there was a massive chimney in the rear room, and into the fire-place had been built or set an iron safe.

The rear windows looked out upon a garden, and there were inner blinds which could be fastened with an iron bar.

Lawyer Brent was a man verging toward seventy years, yet stepped with agile tread, and had a quick, nervous manner about him more like one under thirty.

He had closed his office door, had seated himself in an easy-chair and instead of going to work, as one might expect from his visit on Sunday to his office, he sat lost in deep meditation.

Suddenly there came a tap at the outer door which caused him to start visibly.

He arose and opened the door, and to his surprise beheld a woman, clothed in deep mourning.

"Lawyer Brent, I believe?" she said in a voice that seemed hoarse with emotion.

"Yes, madam."

"I am here to see you, upon a most important matter."

"This is the Sabbath day, madam, and if you will call to-morrow, I will—"

"No, no, not to-morrow, for the morrow never comes to many of us."

"Why put off for another day what can be done to-day?"

"As your case seems urgent, madam, walk in and I will hear what you have to say."

He led the way to the rear room, resumed his easy-chair, and she sat near him, her eyes furtively glancing about her.

"There is no danger of our being disturbed, sir?"

"None, madam."

"Then permit me to begin my business with you by asking if you knew Arnold Mainball?"

An involuntary cry broke from the lips of the lawyer, and his face grew deadly pale.

He essayed to speak, but speech did not come to him until after a mighty effort at self-control, when he asked:

"What was Arnold Mainball to you, madam?"

"I asked you a question, sir, and it seemed to unnerve you."

"Did you not know him?"

"Yes, forty odd years ago."

"He has been dead so long, he was my dear friend of the far past, that is what startled me when I heard his name."

"Ah, yes, I can understand that."

"He was your friend then?"

"Yes."

"And you were his?"

Again the lawyer started, but replied:

"Can there be friendship unless two people are fond of each other?"

"Suppose one is false?"

"May I ask, madam, what business you have with me?" coldly replied the lawyer.

"Were you not the attorney of Arnold Mainball?"

"I was."

"I would like to ask how his estate was settled."

"Have you any interest in knowing?"

"I have."

"What interest?" and the lawyer in vain tried to penetrate the heavy black crepe veil his visitor wore.

"I am his heir."

"Ah! to what?"

"To what fortune he left."

"He left nothing."

"He came here forty-five years ago and bought a home, paying cash for it."

"He lived luxuriously, and yet you say that he died leaving no property?"

"He had the money to purchase his home and fit it out elegantly, with enough for a year's income."

"Then his extravagant living caused him to borrow money upon his home and all, and he died poor."

"How did he die?"

"He was killed in a duel."

"Who was his slayer?"

"A man by the name of Ford Vaughan, I believe."

"Who was Vaughan's second?"

"I have forgotten."

"Who was my kinsman's second?"

"That I have also forgotten."

"Was there a woman in the case?"

"I believe so."

"You were the attorney?"

"Yes."

"You have all the papers belonging to my kinsman?"

"Well, yes."

"I wish them."

"And I refuse to give them to you."

Quick as a flash the woman sprang upon the lawyer and a knife was driven deep into his breast.

Several hours after the body of Austin Brent was found in his office, still seated in his easy-chair.

But there was no clue to the murderer.

CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER TWO ON THE RED LIST.

In a cabin perched upon a high hill, overlooking the surrounding country and up and down

the Potomac for miles, stood a comfortable cabin of four rooms.

It was built of stout logs, was environed by a piazza, had a massive oak door and blinds to match, and a strong high fence surrounding it, inclosing a few acres of ground.

There was a well-to-do look about the place, a horse and cow were visible, with pigs and chickens, and a vegetable garden.

This was the home of an old negro whom his neighbors knew as Uncle Abe, but who, from his living alone and life of perfect seclusion was called the Black Hermit.

Uncle Abe received no visitors and made no visits, and once each week only, on Saturday night, did he leave his home, driving down to the market in Alexandria and purchasing his supplies.

No one had ever seen him go by daylight away from his cabin, though he almost constantly sat upon the piazza smoking and looking across the Potomac toward Georgetown.

He owned his horse, and had for many years, having been set free years before the war, it was said.

He paid his taxes, owed no man anything, and with his form bending with years and snow-white hair and beard, was regarded as a harmless old man, perhaps a bit crazy, at least most eccentric in his every-day life.

The Black Hermit had two dogs that were a terror to the neighborhood, and few cared to go near his home, so savage were they.

And yet one Saturday night when Uncle Abe returned home from market bearing his week's provisions in his little spring wagon, and he lived well, he discovered to his horror a stranger seated in the moonlight on his piazza and the two ferocious brutes crouching calmly at his feet.

Uncle Abe had a stockade fence around his home, seven feet high, and a heavy gate which he always kept locked, so the surprise to him was great indeed when he beheld a stranger in his yard, especially as the dogs he expected would have torn him limb from limb.

"Oh Lordy! it do be a sperrit!" groaned Uncle Abe as he saw that the stranger was clad in white and the dogs did not disturb him.

He had driven into his barn-yard, put up his horse, taken his heavy basket on his arm and was going toward the door of his cabin when he came upon the stranger.

The basket dropped to the ground and Uncle Abe stood staring and trembling.

At last he got up the courage to say:

"Sic 'im, Grip! Take 'im, Tiger!"

But Grip and Tiger merely wagged their tails, and Uncle Abe was about to dash away, as fast as his old legs would carry him, when the stranger spoke.

"Come here, old man, for I have come to see you."

"Lordy, massa, then you hain't a sperrit?"

"Come and see for yourself, old man, who and what I am."

"I thought you mon't be a sperrit, as ther dogs didn't chaw yer."

"No, dogs are not unfriendly to me, for they know me."

"Knows yer, massa?"

"Yes."

"Why, them dogs hain't got no acquaintances savin' it's me."

"You see that I am their friend."

"That's what makes me s'picious of yer, boss."

"No, for I have fed them for weeks, at night, over the fence, until they came to know me well."

"What you do that for, massa?" was old Abe's suspicious query.

"Because I wished to come in here to see you."

"What fer, boss?"

"I wish to ask you a few questions."

"Yas, boss, but I don't know nothin'."

"That remains to be seen, for I am sure that you know that which I wish to find out."

"What's that, massa?" and old Abe still kept some feet distant from his visitor.

"I wish to ask if you were not the slave, the negro body-servant, of Mr. Arnold Mainhall?"

A groan broke from the lips of the old negro, and his knees failing him, he sunk down upon the ground.

"What is the matter, old man?"

"Lordy have marcy, boss, but is yer a ghost or is yer not?" cried the old negro.

"I am human, and you will find it out if you do not answer my question."

"It were so long ago, massa, I has forgot."

"Yer see I is nigh onter eighty year o' age now, and my mem'ry's failing me, sah, so it is."

"You were the body-servant of Arnold Mainhall, and you were with him when he died, when he lost his life in a duel, and I have come to you to tell me the whole story of that affair, so sit there and obey, answering every question, telling all you know, leaving nothing unsaid, or I swear to you, old man, this is your last night on earth, alive."

And so it was, for the howling of the ferocious dogs the next day attracted the attention of the neighbors, and when the cause was investigated Old Abe, the Black Hermit, was found dead in his cabin, while, strange to say, he had been murdered.

But the murderer left no clue to his identity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIRD MYSTERY.

PIERRE D'ARVILLE was a man with a history, yet whose story no one knew.

Rumor had it that he was a French nobleman, and had been a distinguished officer in the French Army, which he left for reasons best known to himself.

He had found a refuge in America and was at once received in society everywhere, and he made Washington City his home.

This was in the long ago, and few recalled the handsome young Frenchman of twenty-six, in the gray-haired old planter of seventy, whose home was upon the Potomac below the capital.

He had a large plantation there, one he had paid cash for, it was said, and the mansion upon it was a fine one of the old-fashioned style.

But not an acre of the broad fields did he till, only a patch of ground for gardening near the house, and he kept but two servants, an old negro man and his wife.

Yet his house was furnished with every luxury, his library was filled with books, the walls were hung with rare paintings and the silver service upon his table was massive and pure metal.

A riding horse and sailboat, with his gun and dogs were his only pleasures, and being a bachelor he did not mingle in society, living the life of a recluse, seldom going to Washington, and then only for the purchase of the necessities and luxuries of life.

Such was the life led by Pierre D'Arville, and no change had been known in it for over forty years.

Seated upon his piazza one afternoon after dinner, smoking a cigar and dreamily regarding the scenery stretched out before him, with the capital city in the distance, Pierre D'Arville was watching with some interest the maneuvering of a small sailboat upon the river.

It passed up and down the river in front of his house for several times, standing close inshore yet making no landing.

There was but one man in the boat and he seemed either not to understand sailing a craft, or to have lost his head from some cause, so strange were the maneuvers of the boat.

Night came on and shut out of sight the little boat, but soon after Pierre D'Arville was startled by seeing a form advancing up the weed-grown gravel walk to the piazza.

He had had an early dinner that his servants might drive up to the town in the one vehicle he kept, so he was all alone.

The visitor advanced with a quick step, ascended to the piazza and said:

"Pardon me, but this is, I believe, known as the Chateau D'Arville?"

"It is, monsieur, and I am the master."

"What business have you with me, for guests are not welcome in the Chateau D'Arville," was the cold response of the old Frenchman.

"So I have heard, sir, yet that did not deter me from seeking you here when I had business with you."

"I have no business with any man, for my life is one of rest, not work."

"But I have business with you, Pierre D'Arville, and hence I have sought you."

"Ha! you intrude upon me, and are insolent as well."

"Keep your temper, old man, for you will need to be cool, as I have come to have a talk with you about Arnold Mainhall."

A start, half rising from his chair, a muttered imprecation followed those words of the visitor, and then the reply came:

"You speak of one who has lain in his grave over forty long years."

"Yes, and you were present when he died."

"It was in a duel that he lost his life."

"I am aware of that fact, and that you were his second in that duel."

"Well, monsieur, matters that happened over

two-score years ago do not interest me now, so I beg you not to discuss the matter."

"But the death of Arnold Mainhall deeply interests me, Monsieur D'Arville, and I came here to look you in the face and tell you that you stand upon the brink of the grave."

"Ha! what mean you, monsieur?" and the old man's manner was nervous now.

"I mean that you have but a few minutes to live, for I am the avenger of Arnold Mainhall."

"His avenger?" gasped Pierre D'Arville excitedly.

"Yes, a Nemesis, and a merciless one, one from whom you need expect no mercy."

"But, monsieur, the Monsieur Arnold Mainhall fell in a duel, and—"

"And you were present at that duel, Pierre D'Arville, and so you fall under my avenging arm."

"See! you are to die, so quickly ask mercy from Heaven, for from me you will get not one atom of mercy," and the Nemesis stepped quickly toward the old planter, a dull thud, a cry, a groan followed, and Pierre D'Arville was a dead man.

And there, seated in his chair, his two servants found him upon their return, and at once the alarm was spread.

But not a trace of the strange Nemesis could be found, and so it was put down as another murder mystery.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOURTH ON THE LIST.

MAJOR MARCUS MAYO had won fame as a soldier in the war with the Florida Indians, and returning to Washington as hero, became a lion in society and was much sought after for his good looks and the prospects of being the heir to a large fortune.

But that was away back a score of years before the war, and one who knew the handsome major in those days would find it hard to recognize him in the Major Marcus Mayo of seventy, who dwelt in a stone mansion out beyond Bladensburg yet within view of the capital.

The major, it was said, had been disappointed in love, had loved one who refused him, and when there were scores of beautiful women who would have been glad to have become his wife, he retired from the army and the world, settled down in the home near Bladensburg which he had purchased, and seemed there content to end his days.

For awhile his comrades had sought him there, but their visits were not encouraged, and gradually he was left alone and looked upon as an embittered man of the world.

His house was known as "Stone Flat," and was a comfortable structure, while, possessed of means, he enjoyed life as best he could in solitude, his only servant having once been his orderly, who had grown gray with his master, and served as cook, valet and companion.

The orderly had but one fault, and that was that he went to bed drunk every night of his life, and in this the major was often wont to keep him company, when he did retire by night, which was seldom, for he usually spent his hours of darkness in his library reading, going to his bedroom only when the dawn began to break.

As the orderly was up betimes and, after a "brandy and soda," was himself again, he had ready for his master what was known as his supper, though eaten in the gray of dawn.

When the major awoke at four in the afternoon, the orderly had a good dinner ready, after which his master went out for a brisk march, as he called his walk of several miles.

Returning at nightfall, he found a midnight lunch set on the sideboard for him, and the orderly taking his supper and drinking himself into a state of oblivion.

So passed the time away with these two strange people.

Seated in his library one night, book in hand, as he had been for many years each evening, his midnight lunch and liquors upon the sideboard near him, the major was given quite a severe shock by hearing a voice behind him say:

"Major Marcus Mayo, I presume?"

The major had prided himself upon his nerves, but he lost control of them with this shock, and uttering a cry of terror, began to tremble like a frightened child.

He had half turned and saw before him a man whom he had never met before.

The stranger was dressed in deep black, wore his hat in a jaunty fashion, and stood regarding

the major with a very strange and piercing look.

"I am Major Marcus Mayo, sir, and this is my home.

"How dare you enter here, and how did you do so?" angrily said the major.

"I entered your house, sir, with a key which opened your door, and I came because this is the home of Major Marcus Mayo, the man I wish to see just now above all other men."

"If you are a robber you will get nothing."

"I will get what I came here for, Major Marcus Mayo."

"What did you come for?"

"To ask you a few questions, and upon them to act."

"Well, I am not one to be catechized, so begone, or I will call my orderly to throw you out."

The major was becoming very angry, as he recovered from the shock of the stranger's presence.

But the visitor laughed and said:

"Your orderly is drunk, as you well know, and nothing could arouse him until he sleeps off the effects of the liquor he has drunk, for his conscience will not allow him to go to bed sober at night, so he drowns it by intoxication, and you dare not, on the same account, sleep by night, so sit up through the hours of darkness, and get your rest in the broad glare of day when there are no haunting specters of night to disturb you."

"Begone, sir!" roared the major.

"Answer me one question, Major Marcus Mayo."

"Well, ask it quickly and go!"

"You were the second of Ford Vaughan in the duel in which he killed Arnold Mainhall."

The question came quickly, unexpectedly, and dragging up from the buried past a scene he remembered but too well, the major sprung to his feet with a startled cry and shouted, as he waved his hand toward the stranger:

"Away! away from me!"

"I will go when I get that which I came here for, your life, Marcus Mayo," and with a leap like a tiger the Nemesis was upon the old soldier.

A short struggle followed and when the orderly called his master to dinner he found him seated in his library dead.

A midnight assassin had killed him, it was said, but who?

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECORD.

It was over a year after the midnight murder of Major Marcus Mayo, before what was termed "the suicide" of Prevost Bassford occurred and as it made up the Red List, of five mysterious murders, if murder the last one was, which had been committed in Washington and its vicinity, within little more than that many years, the chief of the Secret Service Bureau was most anxious to find some clue to the assassins.

As his own force, under Captain Castleton, had failed, the police of the district had gained no clue and he was himself unable to unravel the mystery, he had sought the services of Dick Doom the Detective of the Golden Fetters, and most anxiously awaited his coming.

Seated in his private office the second day after having sent the telegrams searching for Dick Doom, the Secret Service chief was told that a lady desired to see him.

"I am busy now, Burke."

"She said it is most important, sir, and she is in deep mourning and has white hair," answered Burke.

"Show her in then."

A moment after the visitor entered. She was clad in mourning, wore a heavy veil, which she threw back from her face as she bowed to the chief, displaying a sad face, white hair combed down over her temples and gold spectacles.

"Let me introduce myself, sir, as Mrs. Lane, if you are Chief McOmber," she said, softly.

"I am Chief McOmber, Mrs. Lane."

"Be seated, please, and let me know how I can serve you?" said the courteous chief of the Secret Service Bureau.

"I fear, sir, I shall have to take you a long way back, but I am willing to pay liberally for all expenses there may be in searching the records."

"We will be glad to do anything we can, madam, in the line of duty, without charge."

"You are very kind, sir."

"But let me ask you if you have ever come across any record of a duel fought over forty

years ago, by one Ford Vaughan, with one Arnold Mainhall?

"It was when you, sir, must have been an infant, so you see I go back a good many years."

"A duel between Ford Vaughan and Arnold Mainhall, fought forty odd years ago, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will give you the data in a few minutes, madam."

The chief touched a bell, and Burke, the man in waiting, answered the call.

"Send Mr. Carlisle to me, and tell him to bring the books of criminal entries from forty to forty-five years ago."

Mr. Carlisle soon appeared, with three large books in his arms.

"Mr. Carlisle, look up the duel, fought in the District, between Arnold Mainhall and Ford Vaughan, some forty years ago, please."

The bookkeeper soon found the entry, and, at the chief's request, read aloud as follows:

"Upon the night of December 25th, 1840, a duel was fought at Beacon Hill Manor, District of Columbia, between the master of the horse, Arnold Mainhall, and a Virginian by the name of Ford Vaughan, in which the former was run through the heart by a rapier."

"The real cause of duel not known, but supposed to be a quarrel about a lady, Miss Celia Westmoreland."

"The seconds were Marcus Mayo, of the army, for Vaughan, and a French exile, M. Pierre D'Arville, for Mainhall, the witnesses being Austin Brent, Esq., a lawyer, and the negro body-servant of Mr. Mainhall."

"The affair was hushed up, and Mainhall's property being heavily mortgaged, it went to the one who held trusts thereon."

"Is that all the record shows regarding the duel, Mr. Carlisle?" asked the chief.

"No, sir, there is a note which says:

"Arnold Mainhall was buried in R— Cemetery, and some one, unknown, erected a handsome monument, upon which is the line, besides his name:

"'A life for a life is justice.'"

"Thank you, sir," and Mrs. Lane's bow indicated that Mr. Carlisle could retire.

As he did so Mrs. Lane suddenly asked for a copy of the record on the books of the duel.

The chief ordered a copy made and given her, and then she asked:

"Is it known to you, sir, who got possession of the Mainhall property?"

"It is not, madam, but an examination of the records in the recorder of deeds office will show."

"Thank you, sir; may I ask that you send and have the search made, as it will be done promptly for you, and what is more, no mention will be made of it, which by my going would be done?"

The chief wrote a few lines and a messenger was dispatched with them.

Then Mrs. Lane said:

"Was not Beacon Hill Mansion, the same house where dwelt the old man known as the Hermit of the Potomac?"

The chief became more deeply interested at once and said that he believed that it was.

"The Hermit bought it, paying cash, I believe, sir?"

"So I heard, madam."

"I should like to know from whom he bought it, to whom he paid the money, and in whose name the deed was made out."

"I will come to-morrow, sir, for the information," and Mrs. Lane left the room, while the chief muttered to himself:

"How strange that she should come to know about that duel, fought so long ago, and to ask about the home where the old Hermit lost his life."

"Here is more food for thought."

CHAPTER X.

UNMASKED.

THE next morning at the same hour as her visit the day before, Mrs. Lane's card was sent in to the chief, who at once ordered her admitted to his inner office.

"Well, Mrs. Lane, I have news for you," he informed her.

She showed no excitement, took a seat quietly and asked:

"Did you find out about the transfer of the property of Arnold Mainhall?"

"Yes; it was transferred to Ford Vaughan, for value received, along with all its belongings, furniture and land attached."

"To Ford Vaughan?"

"Yes, madam."

"It was he who killed Mainhall in the duel?"

"It was, madam."

"Who were the witnesses to the transfer?"

"The names of Pierre D'Arville and Marcus Mayo are signed as witnesses, with that of Austin Brent as attorney."

"Where are these gentlemen now, may I ask?"

"Dead."

"All dead?"

"Yes, for it was many years ago, you remember?"

"Very true; but, how is it that you know all of them to be dead?"

"Well, by a strange coincidence Lawyer Brent, Major Mayo and Monsieur D'Arville were all murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Yes. Is it not a coincidence that it is so?"

"I should regard it as a very remarkable one indeed, sir."

"But, may I ask, where Mr. Vaughan is?"

"I do not know."

"You have no way of finding out?"

"I do not see how it can be done unless we trace him back to his Virginia home, look up his kindred and thus discover whether he is dead or alive."

"I have talked with several of the oldest inhabitants about the duel, and an air of mystery seems to hang over it now as it did just after it was fought."

"What did they say of Mr. Vaughan?"

"They recalled that he had gone away after the duel and never had been heard of since."

"Now, Chief McOmber, what of the sale of the Beacon Hill property to the old Hermit, Prevost Bassford?"

"Ah! there is a strange circumstance, too, for no sale of the place appears upon the record, no transfer of the property from Vaughan to Bassford; and yet, it was said that he paid cash for it."

"To whom did he pay the money?"

"That cannot be ascertained."

"Then who now claims the property?"

"No one has put in a claim for it, or for the money which he left, some thirty-two thousand dollars."

"But if the property is still in Vaughan's name, and the money belonged to Bassford, then the heir of the former could only claim the estate, and the heir of the latter the money."

"That is true, and well reasoned, Mrs. Lane."

"But, no heirs have yet shown themselves?"

"Not yet."

"The murder was committed about two months ago?"

"Yes, two months ago; but you remember it was a suicide, Mrs. Lane."

"Yes, I know the coroner's jury so decided it to be, but it looks to me very much like a murder."

"May I ask your reasons, madam, for so thinking?"

"Would you not like to know why I am interested in this case, sir?"

"Truly, I would. You came to me to request certain information which you thought I could give you; I have done my best to do so and now I would ask of you just what your own interest in the matter is?"

"I will be frank with you, Chief McOmber, and give you my reasons—curiosity."

"That is a strange reason surely, yet perhaps, with a woman, an excellent one."

"I have another, sir: that of personal interest."

"That is better; but to what extent does your personal interest extend, may I ask, madam?"

"To sift the whole story of this duel, the history of the records, and just why Ford Vaughan left no heirs who have claimed thus far his property, and why Prevost Bassford has had no claimants for the money he left—why he owned the Beacon Hill property without the payment of a dollar for it, and who it was that murdered him, and the motive of the murderer, as it was not robbery surely."

"You surprise me, Mrs. Lane, by your evident deep interest in and knowledge of this case, and when I might have said that curiosity was an unworthy motive for your going into it, I now feel that there is something back of it all in which you are concerned."

"I admit that there is, sir."

"May I ask what that motive is?"

"To solve the whole mystery that hangs over Beacon Hill Mansion, and attaches to those who were friends and foes of its master, Arnold Mainhall."

"And this solved, if it can be, what then?"

"I shall have gained my end."

"And what do you expect to gain by such a consummation of your ends?"

"I shall have performed the duty you desired me to enter upon, sir."

"The duty I desired you to enter upon, Mrs. Lane?" asked the chief, astonished.

"Yes; I am no old lady, as you suppose, chief; I am Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters," was the startling response of the supposed woman in black.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT DICK DOOM HAD TO SAY.

WORDS are inadequate to express the amazement of Chief McOmber, at suddenly discovering in "Mrs. Lane," none other than Dick Doom the detective.

Here before him was the man he had been telegraphing over the country for; the very one he wished to see most of all, to put upon the murder mysteries of the Red List.

And here was the man, in the disguise of an old lady, so perfect he had not seen a flaw in the make-up, talking to him about the very affair he had wished to set Dick Doom upon and also seeming to know just what was wanted from him.

In that disguise he had gleaned from him certain information, given him food for thought, and had shown how bold was his flight in solving a murder mystery.

The chief had been deceived, yet he showed no regret at this.

Instead a smile crossed his face, he flushed, and in an instant had held forth his hand to grasp that of the detective.

"Mr. Doom, we met once before, when you were on your way to the Wild West to solve the mysterious killings at the fort.

"You accomplished all that you were expected to do in that matter, and I congratulate you upon unraveling a very tough skein.

"Now I welcome you to Washington, sir, and frankly forgive the very clever deceit you practiced upon me.

"You are a very remarkable man, Mr. Doom, for I have your record, and it seems a pleasure of yours to take in the chiefs, so I am not alone."

"My dear, sir, it was with no desire to take you in that I come as I do, in feminine garb, but to gain pointers I might not have been able to do as Dick Doom.

"The fact was that I was in Washington when you wired me, but under an assumed name.

"To explain, I have three clerks, one East, another West, another South, whose sole duty it is to take all the papers, cull from them every murder, robbery and crime, and make books of them.

"These books are known by the months in the year; they are scrap-books in fact, with the scenes and dates of criminal deeds at the head of each page.

"These books are my literature, and I keep posted with all that is going on in the United States, Canada and Mexico in the way of crimes, as also the lawless deeds of other countries.

"I saw in this way the murder of Prevost Bassford, and I became interested in it from the sheer report of the coroner's jury, that it was a suicide.

"I felt that it could not be, and so I set to work to solve the mystery.

"I came to Washington as a young planter, registered at Willard's as D. Richards, and began work.

"One man, the chief of police of New Orleans, my devoted friend, knew where to find me.

"He sent me in cipher your telegrams to him, and I was already upon the work I felt sure you wished me to begin upon.

"I called to see you as Mrs. Lane, simply to catch you off your guard, to discover as a stranger what I might not be able to do as a detective.

"I found that you, as I did, believed that Prevost Bassford was murdered, and I knew that I would therefore have your full sympathy in my work, so I made myself known.

"Now, as Dick Doom I am known to a number who visit Washington City, and hence work under cover.

"I will tell you just where to find me, and under what name, but I tell you frankly, Chief McOmber, you will have always to receive me in one disguise or another, so you must give me a password that will admit me to you at all times, whether in your office or home, and full authority to call upon your Government Detectives, and District police, demanding implicit obedience from them when I give an order.

"Under these circumstances only will I un-

dertake the solving of this puzzle of the Beacon Hill mansion murder, and which I am sure dates back much further in its motive than the night it was committed.

"I hope I have made myself understood, chief, and that you will pardon my deception of you," and Dick Doom held forth his hand.

Chief McOmber was a man of the world, a close student of human nature and a far-seeing personage in general.

He saw before him a man who was very properly called a phenomenon in his Secret Service works.

He had the record of Dick Doom written down, and he knew that he was one to trust.

He had wanted his aid, and here, without a knowledge of the fact, the young detective had appeared before him, inveigled from him just what he wanted, and was already upon the work.

"Mr. Doom, I will most readily pardon any deceit you practiced upon me, and I place this case in your hands with perfect confidence that you will unravel it.

"You shall have every assistance that I can give, and we will be friends, I am sure."

Such was the chief's response to Dick Doom.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KNIFE.

THE Secret Service chief was pleased with the man, whom he had sent for in the Bassford mystery, and he was willing to say as much.

After the two understood each other thoroughly, the chief asked:

"Now, Mr. Doom—"

"I am simply Dick Doom, sir."

"Well, Dick Doom, now that you are no longer Mrs. Lane, let us understand each other's theories of this Beacon Hill mansion affair?"

"That means, sir, that you wish me to tell you what I think?"

"Yes, for you are aware that I do not consider it a suicide."

"It was no suicide."

"Ah!"

"It was a well-planned murder."

"For what motive?"

"That is to be found out."

"But you feel that it was a murder?"

"Beyond all doubt."

"Your motive for thinking so?"

"In the first place, no man could drive a knife to the hilt in his heart, and it went that deep the autopsy showed, and withdrawing it, stick that knife in the center of the table."

"You know that it was in the center of the table?"

"I do."

"How?"

"I have seen the table, sir."

"May I ask how, for you were not in the city when the murder was committed, and the house has been securely locked, bolted and barred ever since, for I have the keys."

"Still I visited the house by night, spent the whole day in there, and left the following night."

The chief was astonished.

"How did you get into that house, Doom?"

"Just as the assassin of Prevost Bassford must have done."

"How was that?"

"I climbed up a majestic oak tree, walked out upon a far-spreading limb that touched a rear piazza roof, climbed by a vine-clad lattice to the roof over a wing where there is a large chimney, upon which I observed cleats were nailed for some purpose.

"I discovered that the chimney was a dummy, never having been used, and in it was a lid, which I raised.

"Then I saw a ladder descending the chimney; but remember, sir, I saw the tree, the limb, piazza roof, lattice and the cleats on the chimney, when I visited the place by day.

"At night, with my dark-lanterns, and a bag of food, I visited the spot and made other discoveries."

"And you entered the house by the chimney?"

"I did, sir, descending into a rear room that was used as a store-room, and the door of which was locked."

"I picked the lock, sir, for I always go prepared, and entered an upper hall."

"From this I made my way to the room which the papers described as the one where the murder was committed."

"You are a bold man, Dick Doom."

"What had I to fear, sir?"

"Nothing in reality, yet few men dare face so much as you."

"I thought nothing of danger, I am not superstitious, have my first pang of fear to feel, and stop at nothing to gain my ends by honorable methods."

"And then?"

"I saw the imprint of the knife-point in the table."

"It stuck nearly an inch deep, and was straight down."

"What do you infer from that?"

"That the man who put it there did so by driving it down."

"Ah?"

"It was never thrown, sir."

"Well?"

"It could not have been thrown by a man seated, at any rate, and the table was too large for one sitting down, as was the dead man found, to lean across and drive it there, and his strength could not have been such for him to do so standing, while there was not a drop of blood upon the table."

"You reason most clearly, Doom."

"But then?"

"Where is the knife?"

"I have it."

"See if there is not some sign on the hilt that a blow has been struck there with a heavy object, for there was a hatchet on the hearth, evidently thrown there."

The chief opened a locked draw and took out a bowie-knife, and then closely examined the handle.

"Yes, Doom, here is an impression, as from several blows."

"I felt such would be the case, sir," and Dick Doom took the knife and gazed at it for some time in silence, yet with the deepest interest.

At last he said:

"Do you know of any knife of this make, sir?"

"What is the make?"

"The maker's name is Waters of New York."

"I do not know the maker."

"But here is something quite as important."

"What is that?"

"The name of the knife."

"Ah! It had escaped me."

"What is it?"

"It is called *The Nemesis*."

"Indeed!"

"That would imply an avenger."

"It was just what the man was who took the life of Prevost Bassford, sir," was the quiet response of Dick Doom.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVIDENCE.

"You certainly get at the bottom facts, Mr. Doom," said Chief McOmber, a flash coming over his mind that Dick Doom was the right man upon the solving of the mystery.

"I should like to borrow this knife, sir?"

"Certainly."

It was put away in some pocket of the dress worn by the disguised detective, who then said:

"I shall go to New York to-night, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"To look up Waters, the maker of this knife."

"Why can a letter not do as well, to have the New York chief find the man?"

"I wish to see him personally, sir."

"All right, I will do nothing to thwart you."

"But now to your discoveries in the Beacon Hill mansion?"

"Having settled the knife question, let us feel assured that the man, after taking his life, could not have driven it into the table, seated himself in his easy-chair, taken his watch in one hand, his leather pocketbook in the other."

"It would seem impossible."

"It was impossible, sir, for not a human being could do so, with a knife thrust in the heart."

"Then there is no doubt of his having been murdered?"

"Not the slightest, sir."

"And the man entered as you did?"

"And made his exit as I did."

"You feel sure of this?"

"I do, and I will tell you why."

"It rained on the night of the murder?"

"I shall soon see," and the chief turned to the reports.

"Yes, it had rained hard all day, and into the night."

"There was mud upon the tree, upon the lattice, the cleats and the ladder down the chimney."

"Ah!"

"The man's foot slipped, also, as I saw, and he fell some feet, tearing his coat, for I have a

piece of it, snagged upon a projecting round of the chimney-ladder."

"Indeed!"

"Here it is, sir."

He handed over a piece of cloth about six inches long, in one end of which was a button-hole.

"The snag caught on the buttonhole and tore off this piece, as you see, and in the dark the man did not notice it."

"How do you know that he did not have a light?"

"Because he lighted a match in the lumber room, throwing the burned end upon the floor, and it was a wax match at that."

"Here it is, sir."

"You picked up every thread, I see, Doom."

"All must be picked up, sir, to make the whole complete."

"And then?"

"He went down-stairs, found the old Hermit in his room, surprised him of course, and what-ever followed, ended in the death-blow he gave his victim."

"Then he left all to appear as though the man had committed suicide, perhaps not realizing how his knife-blade had gone into his heart, and leaving the blood to drip around where it was imbedded, that being the only stain upon the heavy oak table, for it was of oak and almost as hard as iron."

"Yes, but why not rob him?"

"That man did not go there to rob, sir."

"For revenge?"

"Sure!"

"But, with money before him why should he not take it?"

"He was an honest man."

The chief smiled in spite of himself, and Dick Doom said:

"You must not make the mistake, chief, that a murderer is also a robber, a dishonest man."

"That is true."

"Revenge is one motive to crime, gain another."

"Very true."

"This man was one who did not need gold, but sought revenge."

"You think he was of the upper class?"

"That piece of cloth proves it."

"It is of the finest broadcloth, not at all worn, and must have covered the form of only a well-dressed man."

"Then there was no robbery committed, which carries out the idea."

"I feel that you are right."

"I know that I am," was the confident reply.

"I am therefore," continued Dick Doom, "to look for the murderer among the highest classes of society, for the knife he carried was an expensive one also."

"It will be a great thing to prove this a murder instead of a suicide."

"It was a murder and can be so proven."

"Did you make any other discovery?"

"Nothing regarding the murder, sir; but I took many notes about the old place during the day that I passed there."

"But I will leave you now, for I go to New York to-night," and Dick Doom left a most favorable impression behind him as to what he was capable of accomplishing.

"That man is a wonder to me, I must admit," mused the chief.

"Is he a man, or a woman, for I have heard it doubted by the best Secret Service men in the profession."

"He goes at the bottom of facts in a marvelous way, and reasons with deepest thought."

"As man or woman his disguises are wonderful, and if any one can solve a mystery he is just that one to do it."

CHAPTER XIV.

TO AVENGE A WRONG.

It was with some difficulty that Dick Doom at last found Waters the maker of the bowie-knife known as "The Nemesis."

He had been a hardware merchant, but had retired from business and was dwelling upon the Hudson in a handsome home.

Dick Doom called upon him and at once stated his business, at the same time saying:

"I am a detective, Mr. Waters, and wish to find out from you the history of a knife you once manufactured."

"What knife was that, sir?"

"You once manufactured bowie-knives?"

"Oh, no, I sold them."

"Will you tell me the kinds you sold?"

The retired merchant, after some thought, ran over half a dozen names, and their manufacturers, then added:

"We sold largely to the South and West trade."

"You do not recall any other knife you sold?"

"I do not, sir."

"Did you not once sell a knife known as The Nemesis?"

"Ah! so I did."

"That had escaped your memory?"

"It had, and I'll tell you why."

"I only manufactured half a dozen of those knives."

"Only half a dozen?"

"That was all, sir."

"I should not think it would pay to put upon the market such a small lot."

"Nor would it have done so under ordinary circumstances."

"Will you tell me the circumstances, sir?"

"Certainly, for I do not mind now, as it was over a dozen years ago."

"Is this one of those knives, sir?"

The merchant took the knife and glanced at it.

"Yes, it surely is."

"I observe that there is a number upon each knife?"

"Oh, yes, so there was."

"That was in the contract, and this is Number Five."

"Yes, but to your story of the contract?"

"Well, about a dozen years ago a gentleman came into my store and asked me if I could manufacture for him a certain style of bowie-knife."

"I told him that I could send to the manufacturer from whom I bought, and if his order was large enough it could be done, I thought."

"He asked how large an order must be given, and I answered that nothing less than a dozen gross would be considered."

"Then he wished to know the price of a dozen gross of a pattern he gave me, and promising to give him an answer in a few days he departed."

"I sent the pattern on and received word that the cost would be to manufacture two thousand dollars."

"He came in and I gave him the estimate, when he at once paid me the money, but contracted especially that only six of the knives should be made, that they should be named The Nemesis, have numbers upon each blade, and an open space in each handle, to be opened by a secret spring."

"And you made the knives for him?"

"I did, sir."

"Only six of them?"

"That was all."

"And he paid you two thousand dollars for them?"

"He did, and I made a large profit upon them, as when the manufacturers found that but half a dozen were needed, they charged me but five hundred for those I got."

"And the gentleman?"

"I never saw him again."

"What was his name?"

"I never knew it."

"Will you describe him to me, Mr. Waters?" asked Dick Doom.

"That is a trifle hard to do, I fear."

"You do not recall him?"

"Oh, yes, but then he seemed like a different man each time that I saw him."

"How so, sir?"

"Well, when he first called upon me he wore a full beard, and his hair was long; he looked like a borderman."

"And then?"

"He returned next day with his chin shaven, side whiskers, his hair trimmed, and wearing a totally different style of dress."

"And the next time?"

"His face was devoid of beard, his hair was cut close, and he wore a suit of black broadcloth."

"In fact, I did not recognize him."

"And then, sir?"

"I did not see him again, for he got his goods ordered and left."

"Was he a large man?"

"He appeared different each time I saw him, yet was the same man."

"His height was about five feet ten, I should say, his weight one hundred and seventy-five, and his movements were quick, and age about thirty, I suppose, or thereabout."

"Did you have any conversation with him—But pardon me, sir, what was the color of his hair, beard and eyes?"

"Dark-brown beard and hair, and eyes that appeared black, but were very dark blue, with very long lashes."

These things all were written down by Dick

Doom in his note-book, and then the former question was repeated:

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

"Well, I asked him why he paid so large a sum for six knives that were not worth, if kept in stock, over twenty dollars each, and his reply was:

"To avenge a wrong, those knives were ordered, sir."

Dick Doom thanked Mr. Waters for all his kindness and returning to New York took the first train back to Washington.

CHAPTER XV.

A FAIR VISITOR.

It was the third day after seeing Dick Doom, as "Mrs. Lane," that Chief McOmber of the Secret Service Bureau received a card upon which was engraved:

"MISS RINGWOOD.

New York."

He ordered Miss Ringwood admitted and there swept into the room a woman of graceful form and dressed in elegant attire.

She wore a half veil, eye-glasses, and bowed haughtily to the chief who arose and placed a chair for his visitor.

She took the seat languidly, looked at the chief in a searching kind of way and said:

"You do not know me, sir?"

"Save by your card, that I have the honor of a call from Miss Ringwood of New York."

"Yes, but that tells you nothing; I might have sent in a card upon which was written 'Miss Smith of Washington,'"

The chief looked a trifle annoyed.

What was his strange visitor and what did she want?

He was so accustomed to meeting all sorts of people he supposed he had become used to them, cranks though many of them were.

But somehow this elegantly dressed, handsome young woman, for she was young, impressed him.

"Will Miss Ringwood kindly say how I can serve her?" he said quietly.

"Yes, by explaining this?"

With this she handed over to him a slip of paper upon which was written:

"Number Five has been sacrificed—Ford Vaughan of Beacon Hill Mansion."

"But there is one more to complete the list of Six."

"Then the Nemesis will be avenged—not before."

"I can bide my time."

This was written in a bold hand, upon a red card, and with an acid that, taking out the coloring, left the writing white.

There was no date, only this red card with its white writing.

The card was three inches in length by one in width, and upon one end was a dagger in black, upon the blade of which in small letters, in white, were the words:

"THE NEMESIS, NUMBER FIVE."

The chief looked the card over again and again, and then glanced suddenly up into the face of Miss Ringwood.

She met his glance with an innocent smile; she was not caught off her guard.

"May I ask where you got this card, Miss Ringwood?" asked the chief.

"May I ask that you first answer my question?"

"What was that question?"

"To explain that card."

"I must know something of this card, before I can offer any explanation."

"What would you know of it?"

"Where did you get it?"

In response the young woman handed to the chief a knife.

"Ah! what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"This is the knife I gave to—"

The chief paused, and the visitor continued:

"To Dick Doom, the Ferret of the Golden Fetters, eh?"

"Yes."

"And I return it to you, sir."

"And Dick Doom—for you must know something about him, Miss Ringwood, what of him?"

"I know all about him, Chief McOmber."

"Where is he?"

"I am Dick Doom, chief!" was the serene answer of the one whom the chief of the Secret Service Bureau had taken for a young and lovely girl.

Something very like an oath escaped the lips of the Secret Service chief, and a cloud crossed his face.

Then, in an instant his face brightened, and

he burst forth in a laugh, as, extending his hand, he said:

"Welcome back, Doom! but, you are incorrigible."

"Pardon me, Chief McOmber, if I seem to try my disguises upon you, but remember, if they pass the scrutiny of your eyes, then I fear no one else. I am not one to be caught in a trap."

"You are right, Doom; so try your disguises upon me all you please, for I rather like to see just what you can do; but you can never fool me again."

"Do not be so sure about that, sir," warned Dick Doom with a smile.

"A basket of wine that you cannot."

"I'll take the wager, sir; but now, to that card?"

"Where did you get it, Mr. Doom?"

"From the hilt of that bowie-knife."

"Ah!"

"I have seen Mr. Waters."

"You found him then?"

"Yes; I went for that purpose. He has retired from business and lives upon the Hudson River. I spent a couple of hours with him."

"And what did you discover?"

"That the one who killed Prevost Bassford had six of those knives manufactured to order—see, they are of the finest steel, the hilts have this secret chamber in them, opened by a spring, as I show you—there!"

"Now this chamber just holds one of these cards, red as you see, with the imprint of a black dagger on one end and the writing with acid."

"He wanted but these six and told Mr. Waters they were intended to avenge a wrong."

"He did? When was this?"

"Just ten years ago."

"And what do you make out of this dagger with a secret chamber, and the red card?"

"I will tell you," and the disguised detective drew his chair closer to the chief, like one who had something important to communicate.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK DOOM AT WORK.

As the chief gazed upon the face of the detective, he did not wonder that he was deceived in him.

There were pendants from the ears, a wig of golden hair, eyeglasses, and a complexion thoroughly made up, with a half-veil covering the face.

The bonnet was a work of art and costly; the dress had been made by a *modiste* who had done her work well; she sported a brooch, a chain and a watch; had gloved hands that were small; wore shapely boots, and had a form that seemed all that could be desired for beauty of outline and grace of bearing.

Then, too, her teeth were ivory-white, even and small, the features regular, and the face was really very attractive.

"Dick Doom, I really believe you are a woman," declared the chief, with emphasis.

"Think so, sir?"

"I do."

"But why?"

"I have seen you at different times, once when you came here on your way to the frontier."

"Yes, sir, I remember."

"Then you were in male attire."

"I remember, sir."

"Then you came, a short time since, as an old lady, dressed in deep mourning, and looking just what you professed to be, for you deceived me completely."

"It shows how readily we can be deceived, sir."

"True, and now you come, representing an elegant lady of fashion, and really I may say a very handsome young girl."

"Thank you, sir; but you also said I made a fine old woman."

"You did."

"You did not suspect me of being a woman when I came to you in male attire?"

"No, I admit that I did not."

"Then, why suspect me now, sir?"

"Then you are really a man?"

"I am Dick Doom, the Detective-at-Large, sir," was the decided answer.

The chief looked him squarely in the face for a moment, and then said:

"Now tell me what your explanation is of this bowie-knife with the secret chamber in the hilt, and from which you took this red card?"

"I have the theory, sir, that the one who paid so large a sum for three knives had six people to kill—a wrong to avenge upon as many persons."

"Well?"

"He has avenged five, that is certain, for this card says *Number Five*, and the same number is on the blade of the knife, burned in."

"Yes."

"Now that card has inscribed as victim *Number Five*, the name of Ford Vaughan."

"True."

"At Beacon Hill Mansion, mark you."

The chief gave a low whistle of surprise.

"The man killed at Beacon Hill Mansion was Prevost Bassford, and there may, or may not be a coincidence in the last of the name Bassford, being a part of the name of Vaughan that is Ford Vaughan."

"I see how you reason, Dick Doom."

"There is a date on that card as well."

"Yes."

"It is the date of the night on which Prevost Bassford, the Hermit of the Potomac, was killed."

"That is so."

"Now I say that the man we were wishing to find has been found."

"Who is that?"

"Ford Vaughan."

"You believe, I see, that Ford Vaughan was Prevost Bassford?"

"I am sure of it."

"On account of his name?"

"No, but on account of that, as one coincidence; that he was killed in Beacon Hill Mansion as another, and on the date of Prevost Bassford's murder as a third, while the fact that Vaughan owned the Mainhall estate from mortgage, or otherwise, the fact that Prevost Bassford did not pay one dollar for the house, yet moved in, taking full possession and holding the place up to his death undisputed, proves conclusively to me who Bassford really was."

"I am of your way of thinking, Dick Doom, now you place it as you do—hang it, I can hardly keep from calling you Miss Ringwood, for it is hard to believe you to be a man."

"I am Miss Ringwood as long as I play the part of the one whose card you received."

"Well, I believe you are on the highway to success in fathoming this mystery, Mr. Doom."

"I know that I am," was the confident reply.

"But there is one thing I wish to know."

"Well?"

"Send at once to the tax-collector's office and find out who paid taxes upon the property of Beacon Hill Mansion all these years."

This the chief at once did—he and his visitor talking together meanwhile.

The messenger returned with a slip of paper upon which was written:

"Taxes upon the Beacon Hill Mansion estate paid by Lawyer Austin Brent in checks, for ten years' payments."

"Last payment made seven years ago, just before death of Lawyer Brent, but increase in value of real estate in district will make taxes due within few months, and for larger sum as per late assessment."

"Who was Lawyer Brent, chief?" asked Dick Doom.

"A rich lawyer who was murdered in his office seven years ago."

"He was murdered, you say?"

"Yes, in his office one Sunday morning."

"By whom?"

"No one knows, for the murderer was never discovered."

"Tell me of it," urged Dick Doom with sudden interest.

CHAPTER XVII.

NUMBER ONE AND FIVE.

In a few words the chief made known all that he knew about the murder of Lawyer Brent.

"It was just before my appointment as chief, and I will read the account in the record for you, for I am not fully posted upon the affair," said the chief.

The book was sent for and the account of the murder read.

"Killed in his office, on a Sunday morning, and found dead in his easy-chair with a knife thrust in his heart."

"The safe open, yet not a thing taken, even the jewelry and pocketbook of the lawyer remaining untouched!" said Dick Doom thoughtfully, as he reviewed the account of the record.

"Yes, such were the facts, Doom."

"I say, chief, was there no trace of the murderer?"

"Not the slightest clue."

"And it was given up as a mystery beyond solution?"

"Wholly, only with the hope that some day we might happen upon the murderer."

"And the knife?" calmly asked Dick Doom.

"The record says that it is in the keeping of this Bureau."

"I will look it up," and the chief went to a case, unlocked it and looked for a certain numbered drawer.

This he unlocked with a key which he took from a large string which he had with him, and from it he took a bowie-knife which was rusted with age.

"Ah! here it is, so look at it, Doom."

The detective took it, looked at the blade, there being no scabbard, and after awhile touched one of the guards in a way that showed he had a motive in doing so.

After several efforts the guard turned upward, on a hinge on the base of the hilt, and one side of the handle, or hilt, slowly moved upward.

Placing his finger under the slide Dick Doom shoved it upward and within the narrow space thus exposed was shown a red card.

Upon it was written the same that was upon the one taken from the other knife, and with acid, except that it was different as to the name and number.

The name on this card was Austin Brent, and the number given was Number One.

That was also the number upon the knife.

The detective handed the card and the knife to the chief in silence.

Chief McOmber looked at both for a long while without saying a word.

Then he remarked:

"This is a strange discovery, Dick Doom, for you have found Number One and Number Five of the knives made for the man who said to Mr. Waters that he wanted them to revenge a wrong."

"That leaves four of them to be accounted for, chief!"

"Yes, and how are we to discover those four?"

"By following our clue."

"What clue?"

"The man known as Prevost Bassford, but whom we know as Ford Vaughan, was Victim Number Five."

"Granted."

"Here, in this knife, we find Victim Number One."

"Granted again."

"He was Austin Brent, a lawyer."

"Yes."

"He is the man who paid Ford Vaughan's taxes."

"True."

"He was therefore interested in some way in Ford Vaughan, alias Prevost Bassford."

"Well?"

"Then we are to find out the others interested in Ford Vaughan, and see if we can discover in them more victims of the miners."

"Ah, yes, I see what you are after."

"Well, there are four more to discover."

"Yes, and we are to search your records for other murders which in some way are connected with the Beacon Hill tragedy."

"It will be a tedious job, I fear."

"Perhaps, and maybe not, chief, for let us see who were those who were at the Beacon Hill mansion the night of the duel."

"Dick Doom, you are the man I want, for it was just these mysteries that utterly set me at sea, left me in the dark."

"See here, let me tell you that there have been five murders committed in Washington and its vicinity in the past five years which have completely set at defiance the police and my best detectives."

"Did you search for the motives in each case?"

"Yes."

"Did you connect the cases as from a common motive?"

"Candidly, I did not."

"Well, we have discovered that Murder Number One, of the lawyer, nearly seven years ago, and Murder Number Five of two months ago, are connected."

"Yes."

"The same man is guilty of both."

"That seems to be the case."

"Now, those six knives were made for as many victims, and had there not been five of them, we would not have this knife with its Number Five upon it, for the Nemesis who set to work to avenge some wrong, whatever it may be, did so in a cool, calculating, and scheming way."

"He was in no hurry, for it has taken him years to run his victims down."

"But now let us, if not too late, save Number Six from his vengeance."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUNSHINE ON DARKNESS.

THE Secret Service chief did not reply for some time after Dick Doom had spoken as he did.

He seemed to have a new light dawning upon him in the matter, and was silent for quite awhile.

Then he arose and went to a case, from which he took a certain book.

Placing this upon the desk before him, he said in a very deliberate manner:

"Dick Doom, this last murder, of Ford Vaughan, or Prevost Bassford, as we knew him, the old Hermit of the Potomac, was the cause of my sending for you.

"I did not connect his murder, and the murder of others, in any way as being by the same hand.

"But they were most mysterious affairs, and as no clue could be obtained to the murderer in each case, I decided to have a talk with you.

"I have not dwelt upon, to you, the other murders which have taken place, but now we will look over the list fully."

"I shall be glad to do so, chief."

"First, there was Lawyer Austin Brent, killed, as you know, in his office seven years ago."

"And with the knife found by his side?"

"Yes."

"Murder Number One, Victim Number One and Nemesis Knife Number One accounted for."

"Yes."

"The next murder," and the chief turned to the book he had gotten, "was that of an old negro man, dwelling across the river in Virginia, owning his own home and living alone."

"His name?"

"He was known as Uncle Abe and also was called the Black Hermit."

"An old man, you said?"

"Yes."

"About what age?"

"I'll read the record."

Then the chief read aloud as follows:

"Murdered in Virginia upon night of June — th, 18—, an old negro known as Uncle Abe and Black Hermit.

"Owned his home, lived wholly alone, was very peculiar, allowed no visitors, kept two ferocious dogs, and had money."

"Three thousand two hundred dollars were found in his cabin."

"Killed with knife—see Drawer Number 66 for weapon—and found in his chair in his home."

"No robbery committed, and the savage dogs not harmed."

"No suspicion fell upon any one, not a soul known to be acquainted with the dogs, and man not known to have an enemy in the world."

"Police and detectives gave up the case."

"That is all that is said, chief?"

"Yes, except that his age is given and the statement of where effects are to be found."

"What was his exact age?"

"It is given here as about eighty."

"Now let us have a look at the knife, please, for I am sure we will find another of the half-dozen Nemesis blades."

The chief went to the drawer referred to in the record and brought out a bowie-knife.

One glance at it and he cried:

"You are right!"

"It is a Nemesis blade and Number Two."

Dick Doom took the knife which was rusty and tarnished with the blood of the one whose life it had taken, and opening the secret chamber in the hilt, drew out a red card.

Upon this was written, as upon the others, with acid:

"The Negro Witness Number Two has fallen. Four yet remain."

"Ah!" said the chief; "that speaks of Uncle Abe as the negro witness."

"Yes."

"It would seem then that instead of avenging a wrong this Nemesis was seeking to get rid of certain witnesses to some crime he had committed," said Chief McOmber.

"It does not strike me that way, sir."

"How then?"

"That the Nemesis is avenging a wrong, or crime done, by taking the lives of all who were directly or indirectly connected with the affair."

"The duel between Ford Vaughan and Arnold Mainhall," quickly said the chief.

"That is just it, for the negro was the slave of Arnold Mainhall, Austin Brent was his lawyer, Ford Vaughan was the man who took his life in the duel, and now we have to read the record of the murder of the two seconds, and we have the chain complete, link by link."

"No, there is one other, for there were six, according to the Nemesis knives."

"True, but the sixth blow has not yet been dealt, as that of Ford Vaughan was the last, and the Nemesis seems in no hurry to carry out his plans of vengeance, so we will have time to act."

"And we must, for at last you are clearing away the clouds that enveloped these mysterious murders, Dick Doom," said the chief, with decided emphasis.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONNECTING LINK.

THE chief and Dick Doom then went over the story of the murder of Pierre D'Arville and Major Marcus Mayo.

The former was put down as having been a recluse, living upon his plantation, which he had never cultivated, yet possessing wealth, as he had left considerable money in bank.

He had been murdered by a knife-thrust, in the hand of some person unknown, in the absence from home of the two old negroes who served him.

A slight clue had been found to the murderer from a sailboat having been seen standing off and on before his house, which was upon the Potomac, and at nightfall was observed running in as though to make a landing.

The knife with which the deed had been committed had not been found, and the murder was still enveloped in mystery.

The plantation was deserted still, save for the two old negroes who dwelt in a cabin not far from the mansion.

That was all that was said of the D'Arville murder mystery.

Referring to the record of the murder of the old Major, Marcus Mayo, the statement was that he was an ex-officer who had bought a home in the vicinity of Washington and had there made himself most comfortable, his only companion being an orderly who acted as cook, valet and generally useful man about the place.

The major was a bachelor, lived luxuriously and had his pronounced peculiarities, never receiving visitors in his home, and never visiting any one.

He had been killed at night in his library, the doors being found locked by the orderly when he arose in the morning.

The orderly's statement was given, but revealed no clue whatever that would point to who the murderer might be.

The orderly had been himself suspected, yet the major had not been robbed of a dollar, as far as could be learned, and after being kept in jail for some time he was released.

He had at once taken his own life, and this was looked upon by many as convincing proof that he was the murderer of his master, for it was said that he went to bed each night of his life stupefied with liquor.

Since the murder of the major his home had been locked up, not a soul claiming to be the heir, though he had left money to a considerable amount and his property was very valuable.

"And the man was murdered with a knife, chief?" asked Dick Doom.

"Yes, as the others were."

"And the knife?"

"It is here, the record says."

The chief arose and went to a numbered drawer where he found the knife.

"It is a Nemesis blade," said Dick Doom as he took hold of it.

"Yes, and the the number on it is Four."

"Then we have four knives and five murders."

"We must get the other knife, chief."

"We must, if we can."

"We have the proof now that the Nemesis got five of his intended six victims, and one thing is sure, that they were the ones who were present at the duel in the old Beacon Hill Mansion."

"Yes, that much is certain."

"All the victims are old men, over seventy, and the avenger, from the account of Mr. Waters who made the knives, was a man of thirty odd."

"That seems strange."

"Yes, for one might expect the Nemesis to be old also."

"But the orderly committed suicide, you say?"

"Yes, he went home, wrote a letter stating that he had no desire to live, with his master and friend gone, so would put poison in his whisky and never awake from his sleep."

"And he did?"

"Yes, the autopsy proved that he had taken poison enough to kill half a dozen men."

"Where was he buried?"

"By the side of the major."

"Did he leave no will?"

"None."

"No heir has come to claim his money?"

"Not a soul."

"How much money did he leave?"

"Several thousand dollars, I believe."

"He was an old man?"

"Yes, about the age of the major."

"Where are those five victims of the Nemesis buried, chief?"

"All but the negro are in the R— Cemetery."

"Well, I am pretty well armed now for discoveries, so I will set to work, and, unless I need some other information, you will not see me for several days."

"Should you wish to find me, just make a blue pencil-mark of a cross upon the rear door of the Beacon Hill Mansion."

"Are you going there?"

"Yes, I am making the old mansion my headquarters, for there is much to learn there," was Dick Doom's reply.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BROKEN RAPIER.

THE next day, toward sunset, upon a good horse, a young man wearing eyeglasses, and a handsome riding suit, with slouch hat and top-boots, rode across the Aqueduct Bridge into the State of Virginia.

He made his way to a distant hilltop, not more than a mile from the Potomac, and halted at the home of the old negro, Uncle Abe.

The place was deserted, had been since the old negro's death, and no one had come to claim its ownership.

The negroes living in the locality, and there were many of them, avoided the spot as they would a plague, and strange stories were told of its being haunted.

Ghosts were said to make their abiding-place there, and the more superstitious vowed that at night loud screams for help and mercy were heard coming from the place.

But the horseman did not appear to dread going to the spot, for after passing by it in daylight, he halted and watched the sunset and gazed admiringly upon the grand view spread out before him upon every side.

Just as the shadows began to fall he rode on, but, after going a mile or two, when it became dark, he returned toward the Black Hermit's house.

He took a bridle-path that led him toward the rear, so that he would not be seen, and, having noted that the gate was fastened with a chain and padlock, he rode up to the high stockade fence, and hitching his horse, stood up in his saddle and leaped over.

He made his way to the log cabin, and with a key unlocked the door.

Once within, he lighted a dark-lantern which he carried and then proceeded to take a careful survey of the premises.

He passed an hour or more there, and then returning to his horse, rode back to the city.

Leaving his horse at the stable, he made his way along the little-frequented street which led by the old Beacon Hill Mansion.

He entered the foliage-clad yard, opened the door with a skeleton key, and lighting his lamp again, made his way to a large room upon the second floor, which had been used by its owner as a billiard-room and gymnasium.

The billiard-table was there, but moved to one end of the room, and the cloth was all moth-eaten.

There were numerous belongings to a gymnasium visible, and upon the walls were paintings of the chase, sporting scenes, and a number of weapons of various kinds.

There were rifles, shot-guns, pistols and swords, boxing-gloves, foils and masks.

Among the swords were a pair that were crossed together upon hooks.

They were a splendid pair of rapiers, only that one blade was broken close to the hilt, and the other was stained half its length.

The young man, whom the reader will know was Dick Doom, took down these rapiers, the hilt and broken blade as well as the other, and carried them into an adjoining room.

This room had once been elegantly furnished, but the furniture was time-stained, and neglect and desolation rested upon all.

It had been a bed-room, for a bath and toilet-room was adjoining, and there rested upon all an air of luxury, proving that the occupant loved his ease.

Taking from his pocket several bottles, Dick Doom secured a plate and then began to scrape the stain off of the blade of the rapier.

He soon had a quantity in the plate, and pouring upon it certain acids, after awhile said:

"Yes, it is blood, human blood."

"This is the rapier that killed Arnold Mainhall, and it was in the hand of Ford Vaughan."

"Now to see why this blade was broken."

He examined the blade most carefully and suddenly gave a low whistle as though he had made some discovery.

"Well, this blade was filed half in two and close to the hilt, and the strain upon it in combat caused it to snap in two—which develops an act of treachery."

"Suppose, after all, that the duel was not a square fight, but that the seconds were leagued to let Ford Vaughan take the life of Arnold Mainhall?"

To my mind it begins to look as though such might have been the case.

"Now to look further into this mystery."

The longer and more thoroughly he examined the broken rapier the more certain he was that the blade had been treacherously filed half in two. But, by whom?

"It looks to me as though, for more reasons than one, Arnold Mainhall was wanted out of the way, and the putting him out of the way was surely accomplished."

"Well, I have made important discoveries tonight; I have visited the old home of the Black Hermit; but will wait until to-morrow night to accomplish more, for this ancient homestead surely has more skeletons in its closet to find, and I am on the search for grim secrets just now."

With this the detective left the room and the house, making his way to a small house upon a secluded street in Georgetown.*

CHAPTER XXI.

A LOVE LETTER.

THE next day, mounted upon his horse, Dick Doom rode out to the home of Major Marcus Mayo.

It was isolated from other places, so he was not seen to enter the house, having left his horse in the rear in the woods.

He saw the major's library, sitting-room and bed-chamber, all as they had been left by him, except for the wear of time.

With a bunch of skeleton keys he opened doors of closets, desks and went where he pleased.

The orderly's room he visited, and that was also, as the old soldier had left it the night he took his dose of poison and lay down to die.

For several hours did Dick Doom stay in the house, searching here and there for some clue, and going over books, letters and all that might shed any light upon the life of the old major.

At last he departed, and returning to Georgetown, went to the quarters which he had rented during his stay in the city.

He took his meals where he could get them, so kept no servant, and so the neighbors knew nothing whatever about the persons who had rented the little furnished house in their vicinity.

I say persons, for they had seen, as they believed, an old lady, a maiden and a young man go in and out of the cottage.

When darkness fell Dick Doom made his way again to Beacon Hill Mansion.

He entered as before, with his skeleton keys, and this time seemed to have some special object in view, for he went at once to the heavy desk standing in the library.

This was locked, but yielded to the skeleton keys.

Within was a massive inkstand, a gold pen and paper.

There were bundles of letters there, too, all stained by age, and neatly folded and tied with ribbon.

These the detective opened and carefully looked over.

There were business letters, notes from friends and other communications.

Several of these Dick Doom laid aside.

Then he untied the ribbon which held one small bundle of letters together.

These were all addressed in a delicate, feminine hand and where some had been sent by messengers, others had been mailed in Washington, for the stamp was upon them.

Some of these notes were thanks for flowers sent, a gift which the writer had received and acceptance of invitations for a ride or drive.

One was in answer to an avowal of love, and ran as follows:

"I felt that I could no longer hide from you that I loved you, and I almost feared to be in your presence dreading your discovery of my secret."

* Georgetown is now included in Washington City.

"But now, my heart's idol, I can write as I feel, act frankly toward you, as you have told me that which is the greatest joy of life, that *you love me*."

"I need not tell you how fondly that love is returned, as I know you have suspected it all the while."

"You say that you would have told me long ago of your love for me, but that you dreaded that I loved your rival, as you are pleased to call Mr. V—"

"Ah no! I do not love him, but, on the contrary, I fear and despise him."

"The truth I cannot tell you, dare not, for it is not my secret; but he holds a power over me through others which I cannot shake off."

"Would to Heaven that I could!"

"He has asked me to marry him and I told him that I loved another; but his answer was that it made no difference whom I loved—that I was to be his wife, and I shall be forced into a marriage with him soon, unless you can secretly claim me as your wife, since I dare not now openly wed you."

"There, you know now what it is between V—and myself, so you can act as you deem best, and I am ready and willing to be guided by you, my loved one."

There was more to the letter, but it did not seem to interest the inquisitive searcher for secrets.

He had discovered that Arnold Mainhall had told a maiden of his love, and dreaded as a rival one, V—.

That the said V— held a secret power over the maiden, who left all for Mainhall to arrange as he deemed best.

These letters were signed with the name: "*Celia Westmoreland*."

This letter was placed by Dick Doom in his pocket, and then he began to search for more information.

It was midnight when he left the old mansion and made his way to his own quarters.

The next morning, on his way to breakfast, he went by the Beacon Hill Mansion, as was his wont, and there in the door beheld the blue cross which he had told the chief of the Secret Service to have put there if he was wanted.

"I will postpone my trip down the river to-day and see what the chief wants," he said, and after breakfast he returned again to his quarters.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHIEF'S CLUE.

THE chief had discovered a clue, and anxious to make it known to Dick Doom, he went to Beacon Mansion and made the blue cross mark upon the door.

The next morning as he sat in his office, wondering why Dick Doom delayed in coming, Burke came in and said that there was an old negro who wanted to see him, and reported having important information for him.

"Admit him," was the prompt order, and soon after, with a limping, shuffling gait, half-bent with age, and with white hair and beard, the old negro entered the room.

He carried a heavy cane, was dressed in a coat of many patches and wore a pair of iron-rimmed spectacles of immense size.

He carried a canvas bag with him, as a receptacle doubtless for any gift he might receive or anything that came his way to pick up.

"Mornin' boss!" he saluted, uncovering his white head.

"Good-morning, uncle. Sit down there," said the chief respecting the old man's years.

The negro dropped into the chair with a fervent:

"Tankee, boss! You is a most perlitte gen'man."

"Well, uncle, what can I do for you?" asked the chief kindly.

"What kin you do fer me, boss?"

"Yes; how can I serve you?"

"That hain't it, sah."

"Is not what?"

"Hain't ther way ter put it."

"Well, how would you have it, uncle?"

"It's what kin I do fer you, boss; dat's w'at it am."

"Ah! that is it, is it?"

"It am, sah, 'pon honah!"

"Well, what can you do for me?"

"Lots an' jobs!"

"Out with it then, and if you have anything of value to communicate I will be glad to pay you for it."

"Tankee, boss!" and with a sudden change of voice came the words:

"Just pass me that basket of mine, chief! You waghered me that you would know me in my next disguise and—"

"The devil!"

"No, chief, Dick Doom, only, and at your service!"

"Doom, you are a terror, your mother would

not know her own son, you make any thing possible, in the way of changing your identity. How on earth did you get that coloring? It is perfect. No person could ever tell it from the skin of an African."

"It is a coloring I happened on once, sir."

"And the wig and beard seem fairly to be growing to your head and face."

"They are stuck on, sir."

"And your Joseph's coat of many colors and patches—where did you get that?"

"Made it myself, sir, as a disguise."

"You shall have the wine, and you have won it fairly; but I'll wager you a diamond studded gold detective badge you cannot deceive me again."

"I'll take the bet, sir, for one of like kind for yourself."

"It's a bargain."

"Now, sir, you wanted me?"

"Yes, I have a slight clue, and you can work on it to see what it will pan out."

"Yes, sir."

"There lives upon Georgetown Heights, I am told, an old woman tottering with age and who is greatly feared by all who know her, for she is called a witch."

"She is known as Old Hazel, the Witch, and she has lived where she now does for a great many years it is said."

"Her cabin is on an acre lot and built against a cliff, while it commands a view of the Beacon Hill Mansion and far up and down the river, with a vast expanse of surrounding country."

"What is strangest of all is that it is reported to me that she is known to pass through the grounds of Beacon Hill Mansion every day of her life, and on each Christmas Day the neighbors have noticed that she ties a large piece of crepe upon the brass knocker of the old home."

"Upon New Year's day this crepe is removed, to be placed there the following year."

"That is strange."

"It struck me as being so remarkable that I at once went out to see the old dame."

"And saw her?"

"Yes."

"How does she live?"

"All about her is as neat as wax, but she is a remarkable character."

"They say that there are days when she will not utter a word, and I found her on one of those days; for she made no response to my questions."

"I will look her up."

"Do so, for it is said that she has dwelt in her present home ever since the deed in Beacon Hill Mansion and she may know something about it."

"She may, and I will see what she does know and who she is."

"I wish that you would, for the old woman interests me greatly."

"Now, sir, I will tell you what I have been doing, though I did not intend to come to see you until I had made one more venture, that is, visit the home of Pierre D'Arville."

"Ah!"

"I have gone to the homes of the Black Hermit, Major Mayo, and of course to Beacon Hill Mansion."

"And you have made some discoveries, I feel certain?"

"I will tell you, sir, just how we are progressing in shadowing our Nemesis," was the rejoinder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNWEDDED.

DICK DOOM told the Secret Service chief of his visit to the cabin of the old negro, the Black Hermit, and to the home of Major Marcus Mayo.

"Now I have to go to the plantation of D'Arville, and next to the home of Austin Brent, the lawyer."

"But let me tell you a coincidence about those houses you may not have noticed."

"Yes."

"They are every one deserted."

"So they are, even to the elegant residence of Austin Brent."

"Another coincidence that I have marked, chief, is that Ford Vaughan was unmarried, or at least no record of his marriage can be found."

"Well?"

"Austin Brent never married."

"That is so."

"No negroes put in a claim for the Black Hermit's property, and had he been married his wife would most surely have turned up."

"Without doubt."

"The major was not a married man, for no one has claimed his belongings."

"Nor have the belongings of the orderly been claimed," the chief said.

"Nor has a wife, or heir of any kind, put in a claim for the valuable property left by Pierre D'Arville."

"I have heard of none."

"Now, it seems to me a very remarkable coincidence that of these five men not one of them should have wedded, and not a single heir appear to claim their property."

"It is remarkable, Doom, and I had not thought of it before."

"And their houses are all now deserted and going to decay."

"That is so."

"I shall know perhaps more when I have visited the lawyer's house and the D'Arville Plantation, for I did glean some information last night in Beaver Hill Mansion."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, for with my keys I went through the locked rooms, closets and desks."

"And made some discovery?"

"Well, yes, sir."

"Nothing escapes you, it seems, Doom."

"I try to see all that there is to see, sir."

"But this discovery in the Beacon Hill house?"

"I went into what was used by Mainball as his gymnasium and billiard-room."

"The billiard-table is there, moved into one corner, however, as though to give room for the duel with swords that was fought in that room."

"Was it fought there?"

"It was fought in the mansion, it is said, and why not there?"

"True."

"There is a stain of blood upon the floor in the center of the room, as though it had gushed out in a stream from a sword-thrust."

"Then there is a trail to the lounge, where a stain of blood is visible upon the floor, and as though in a pool."

"There is the same stain upon the lounge, showing that the dying man was carried there by those with him."

"His friends?"

"If he had any friends there, chief," was the significant reply of Dick Doom.

"What do you mean?"

"I begin to think that the master of Beacon Hill Mansion had no friends with him the night of that duel."

"There was his second and—"

"A second may not always be a friend, sir."

"But I am getting ahead of my story."

"You have more to tell?"

"Yes, for I scraped off the stain on the blade of one rapier found there in the room, and putting it to the test found it to be human blood."

"The stain reached just eighteen inches from the sword point, and so the blade must have been driven through the body of Arnold Mainball."

"It would seem so."

"The other rapier is broken off at the hilt."

"That was what killed Mainball, for it is said that he was a wonder as a swordsman."

"Then it was done to intentionally kill him, sir, for the blade had been filed half through close against the hilt."

"What! can this be true?"

"It is, sir, for I saw the filing on either side and there where the steel, left very thin, was broken."

"This looks like black work, Dick Doom."

"It looks bad, sir."

"Well, you have indeed made a discovery."

"And there is more to tell, sir."

"More yet?"

"Well, in going over the letters and papers in Mainball's private desk, which I unlocked, I found some interesting data."

"Among them was a love letter. I have it here, written, as you see by the date, three months before Mainball's death, and signed by Celia Westmoreland."

"You see what it says, chief, and that he looked upon Ford Vaughan as his rival and that the writer greatly feared Vaughan, and urged a secret marriage with Mainball as a means of escape from the man she dreaded."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT.

THE chief read the time-worn letter of Celia Westmoreland carefully through twice, and then said:

"This is a strong link indeed, Doom, and, added to your story of the broken sword, the

bloodstains and all make other links in the chain of evidence.

"I now begin to see why you said that after all Arnold Mainball may not have had any friends with him that night of the duel."

"Now what is to be done next?"

"Go to the lawyer's house to-night, and tomorrow to the plantation of Pierre D'Arville."

"I shall then have gone the rounds of the houses, and afterward will visit the old witch you spoke of while I shall keep watch for her going into the Beacon Hill grounds."

"Well, remember that there is a wager about your next disguise," said the chief as Dick Doom arose to depart.

"I shall not forget it, sir," answered Dick Doom with a laugh.

Then, assuming his shuffling gait he left the inner room of the chief and hobbled past those without on his way down-stairs, several of them joking him, yet not one suspecting that he was other than he professed to be.

Back to his quarters in Georgetown went the Man of Many Masks, and an hour after entering his home he emerged again dressed like a dude, with cane, eye-glasses and flashy attire.

He made his way to the fashionable quarter of the city, where was the home of Austin Brent, and letting himself into the yard by a brass key that opened the gate, went around to the rear of the house.

It was a large brick residence, standing in the midst of a square, and with a wall surrounding it, except just in front, where there was a high iron fence.

There was a stable in the rear, and yet all wore a dingy look, as the grounds were overgrown from long neglect.

His keys let him into the house and then Dick Doom saw that all was just as it had been left the day of the funeral, when the servants were dismissed and the Secret Service chief had locked the place up and taken the keys.

The house was handsomely furnished, and there was an air of comfort upon all.

Paintings adorned the walls, the carpets were heavy and soft, and all showed that the master had been a man of refinement and wealth.

And yet he had never had intimates, never had allowed a visitor to cross his threshold, living wholly in himself and for himself.

All over the house the detective went, his keys letting him into every locked door, closet and desk, and when papers and letters came before his eyes he rapidly scanned them over.

Suddenly, in an inner hiding-place, he came upon a paper which he read most carefully.

It was as follows:

"I hereby bequeath to my dear friend Ford Vaughan, all my property, whatever it may be, with moneys in my house, and in bank, making him sole executor of my estate."

"This is dated just one month before the duel between Arnold Mainball and Ford Vaughan," said Dick Doom.

Then he added aloud:

"Yes, and it is signed by Arnold Mainball and witnessed by Marcus Mayo and Pierre D'Arville, while here is a statement signed by Austin Brent, attorney and notary public, that the signature was genuine and all in proper form."

"This is a very valuable document, and I am very glad I came to the attorney's house."

"Now for a stroll about the grounds of the old Beacon Hill Mansion."

He wended his way back to Georgetown and entered the grounds of Beacon Hill through the half-tumbled down gate.

He noted that there was a path there, across the grounds, around the house, and out of a break in the brick wall that surrounded the mansion.

He had just gone around to the rear of the mansion when he heard voices, and hastily he darted into the well-house.

A moment after there came into view three stout negro men, and they were talking earnestly together.

"I tells yer we won't have no luck 'long as that old witch hoodoos us as she do, and I says jest kill her, I does," said one.

"Yas, if witches kin die; but maybe we can't kill her," another remarked.

"Don't be a fool, Josh, for witches kin be kilt and easy too."

"She'll be along soon, and I has watched her."

"She allus gits a drink o' water at the well, so we kin jist lay low and grab her, and once I gits my fingers on her old throat she's got ter die."

"Yas, and then we'll have some luck; but now, long as she lives up yonder on ther bill

lookin' down 'pon us, we won't git nothin' but bad luck."

"Come, lit's hide in the well-house."

And they did.

'CHAPTER XXV.

THE GOLDEN FETTERS.

WHEN Dick Doom heard the voices of the negroes, and what they said, he looked about for a hiding-place.

There was a box where things had doubtless been placed to keep cool, and damp and close as it was he quickly raised the lid and got into it.

He was not a moment too soon, for into the well-house went the three negroes to lie in wait for the coming of the old witch.

All that they said reached the ears of Dick Doom, so that he could know just when to act, for he had made up his mind just what he would do.

He was beginning to find his quarters becoming very tiresome, when one of the negroes said in a low tone:

"Ther' she comes!"

"You got ter choke her first, Si."

"Yas, I'll do ther chokin' and you and Josh jist tap her on ther head with them iron rods yer carries, fer it takes three ter kill a witch, yer knows."

"We'll be with yer, Si."

A moment after and Dick Doom heard the three negroes move quickly from their position, and throwing up the lid of the box he made a leap and was upon them.

And not a moment too soon, for one had grasped their victim by the throat and a second was just dealing her a blow on the head with a small iron bar, when he fell to the ground as though shot, under a blow from Dick Doom.

In a moment a second blow had felled another of the trio, while the third, who had grasped the woman's throat, was in the iron grasp of Dick Doom.

In vain he strove in his terror and fury to free himself, for he was powerless in the grasp of the young detective, who quickly slipped upon his wrists a pair of handcuffs of yellow metal.

Not an instant did he delay then in placing steel manacles upon the wrists of the other two negroes, who were still dazed by the blows they had received.

A small chain was then run through the manacles and the three negroes were securely bound together by their captor, upon whom they gazed with superstitious terror.

"Who are you?"

It was the woman who asked the question and she stood gazing at the young dandy, as the detective looked, almost with awe and certainly with admiration.

She had been hurled to the ground by her captors, and her head was cut and bleeding, while her throat had been roughly handled.

She was a woman with darkly bronzed face, snow-white hair, large, lustrous black eyes, and in spite of her age, with snow-white, even teeth, certainly one who had been a beauty in her youth.

She was dressed in black, save she wore a red scarf about her waist, and upon her head a scarlet Turkish fez, with a gold tassel.

She wore several necklaces, bracelets and many rings upon her long, bony fingers, and all had the appearance of being genuine gold and gems.

There was in her face a look that won Dick Doom, rather than repulsed him, and he knew that the one whose life he had saved was she of whom Chief McOmber had spoken, Hazel the Witch.

In answer to her question, which was asked in a voice plaintive in tone, he responded:

"Oh, I am a young man traveling for pleasure, and strolling into the grounds of this old rookery, I overheard these three negroes plotting to kill some one, so I hid and waited for them to make the attack."

"I only wish I had been quick enough to save you that blow."

"It is nothing."

"Blood does not frighten me; but you are a giant in strength, young man, and you have saved my life."

"Well, these blacks shall suffer for laying hands upon Hazel the Witch."

"I have a mind to strike them dead now."

"No, no, do not do that; but instead, do me a favor."

"Anything?"

"Take them to Secret Service Chief McOmber, and tell him what they did."

"Tell him I will come and make my report in good time against them, and to give you these gold and steel manacles, for you keep them for

me, for I wish to come and have my fortune told.

"May I?"

"Gladly; and I will keep the manacles for you," and Hazel the Witch marched off with her three terribly frightened prisoners.

She walked down to the river-bank, where she had a boat, and making her prisoners get in aft, she seized the oars and sent the craft flying down the river.

Landing at the nearest point to the White House she crossed the lots to the quarters of the Secret Service Bureau and startled Chief McOmber by suddenly appearing before him with the trio of manacled negroes.

Then she told her story, and having given her prisoners over to the chief, she took the gold and steel fetters and started upon her return home, while Chief McOmber muttered:

"Dick Doom plays trump cards only, and has won that old woman to his will, that is certain."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SOUVENIR OF MURDER.

THE day following his rescue of Hazel the Witch, Dick Doom went down to the wharves in search of a sailboat.

He was dressed in the garb of a man-of-war's man, and had the rolling walk of a tar exactly.

He chartered a cat-rig boat, and proved himself to be an expert as a sailor as he was a rider.

Down the Potomac, under pressure of a stiff breeze, flew his boat, and an hour's run brought him off an old plantation home situated not far from the river's edge.

Around it were fields of many acres, but all untilled, and there was an air of desertion, neglect and decay upon all.

The mansion was a large one, with vines overrunning it and not a sign of life about it, other than the birds that sung in the trees near by.

There was a small cabin an eighth of a mile away, back among some trees, and about it was a garden, with a horse and a cow in the pasture near.

A few pigs and some chickens showed that the cabin at least was occupied.

Dick Doom made a landing near the mansion and spent some time looking about it.

Then he walked over toward the cabin and was welcomed by a rush of half a dozen dogs, of all sizes and breeds, and without which no well-regulated negro home is complete.

But Dick Doom paid no attention whatever to the snarling brutes, which brought forth a cry from an old woman who came out from the cabin, of:

"Lordy, honey, dem dogs done eat you up, I reckon—no, dey 'pears ter take a shine to yer."

"I have no fear of dogs, auntie, and they never trouble me."

"But whose place is this?"

"Dis de D'Arville Plantation, sah."

"It is for sale?"

"Lordy, boss, I doesn't know, and I reckon my old man don't nuther."

"Come out here, old man, and talk to de gemman."

With this, out of the cabin limped an old man equally as old as his wife.

He said that the master had been murdered some years before, and that they were allowed to live in the cabin and had a little money for their support.

At the request of Dick Doom he told his story of the murder and was suddenly startled by the question:

"Well, old man, what did you do with the knife your master was killed with?"

The old negro dropped into a chair as though he had been struck a blow.

He tried to speak, but began to stutter, and Dick Doom said:

"Come, old man, tell me about that knife, and tell the truth, for you see I know all about it."

"Boss, 'fore Heaven I believe yer does," at last stammered the old man.

"You have that knife?"

"Yas, sah, I has."

"Tell me the truth about it, and no harm will come to you."

"Yer see, boss, I come home with my wife ther time o' ther murder, and thar sot Massa D'Arville in his easy-chair in de library, with thet knife stickin' up in the floor near him."

"I tuk the knife ter keep in remembrance of poor Massa D'Arville, but ter give it up ef I were axed fer it."

"But none o' ther officers said a word about it and I kept quiet too, and I has it now."

"Who it was thet kilt poor massa nobody knows, but he wasn't robbed o' nothin', and all about ther house was jist as we left it."

"Well, old man, give me that knife, and here is a ten-dollar bill in exchange for it."

"Then I would like to see through the house, as it looks like a pleasant house for one to live in."

"It is, boss, and I thanks yer fer ther money. Old woman, jist git ther knife what kilt old massa, and give it to this gemman."

The old negress got the knife, fishing it out of some secure hiding-place, and after glancing at it Dick Doom thrust it into his pocket, and told the aged couple that he would not worry them to show him through the house, but would go alone, and return them the keys.

"He's gone so powerful long I guesses he's going ter buy ther place, and then we gits a job, old woman," said the old man.

But at last Dick Doom returned, gave up the keys, and said that he was much pleased with what he had seen.

Half an hour after he was in his boat sailing back to Washington, and with the weird souvenir, the missing Nemesis's knife in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DIAMOND BADGE.

It was the day following his visit to the plantation of the murdered D'Arville, that Dick Doom decided to report to the chief the finding of Knife Number Three, which the Nemesis had used, so he went to the quarters of the Secret Service Bureau, again wearing his disguise as "Mrs. Lane."

But the chief was out, had gone over to Baltimore, but would be at home that evening, should anything important occur that he was needed.

He was seated in dressing-gown and slippers, after his return from Baltimore, enjoying what leisure a man in his busy and important position could, when the girl came in and reported a messenger boy bearing an important letter.

"Show him in, Bridget."

Into the room came a very fat messenger boy, walking at a snail's pace.

His hair was fiery red, as were also his eyebrows, and his face was as freckled as a turkey egg.

"I tuk this letter ter Headquarters, sir, and ther Capp there he sent me up here wid it, so it's extra pay," said the boy.

"Do not fret about your pay, my boy, for you will get all your services are worth, never fear," and the chief took the letter and broke the seal.

"Ah! it is from Doom, and he says he called to-day to say that he had found Nemesis's knife Number Three, and will drop in at ten in the morning."

Then turning to the boy he said:

"There is no answer, boy, and here is your pay."

"No, chief, I want my diamond badge," came the response from the messenger-boy.

Chief McOmber leaped to his feet with something very like an oath breaking from his lips; but then he broke forth in a hearty laugh and said:

"You have earned it, Dick Doom."

"But sit down and let me look at that make-up of yours."

"It is merely plenty of clothing, chief, a red wig and eyebrows, with a few blotches on my face and chewing gum inside my cheeks."

"You are the most perfect adept at disguising yourself, Doom, I ever heard of."

"This disguise would not muster by daylight, but at night it is all right."

"Well, you have won your diamond badge and I will have it made for you, with the inscription put on it to please myself."

"But is it true that you have found the missing knife?"

"Yes, sir, Number Three."

"That was D'Arville's knife, or rather the one he was murdered with."

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you find it?"

"I went down to D'Arville Plantation and found there the two old negroes who had been his servants."

"I got from them all they know, and then sprung the question upon the old man as to what he had done with the knife."

"He weakened at once and gave up the knife, for which I paid him ten dollars."

"Then I got the keys and went all over the house."

"It was a pleasant home, and one thing is certain that every one of those men murdered by the Nemesis lived lives of luxury."

"It would seem so."

"But did you make any discovery in the house?"

"I looked over all that was three but found nothing of real importance, sir."

"Well, let me congratulate you upon the very clever manner in which you made the acquaintance of Hazel the Witch."

"Yes, I was indeed most fortunate."

"Did these three negroes really intend to kill her, or rob her, for she wears considerable jewelry you know, and it is genuine."

"Yes, sir, and they doubtless would have robbed her too; but their plot was to kill her, and each one was to do his share, for they called her a witch, said she gave them bad luck, and unless they killed her they would be hoodoo'd."

"You heard their plot?"

"All of it, sir."

"Then your testimony will send them to prison for a long term of years."

"But you have no idea how you surprised the old woman."

"In what way, sir?"

"By your strength in mastering those three men."

"I got them at a disadvantage, sir."

"Not in the least when three desperate men were against you."

"One of them told me that he was as a child in your grasp."

"Then that does away with your suspicion that I am a woman, sir?" said Dick Doom with a smile.

"I really do not know what to think of you, Doom."

"But I gave the woman your fetters."

"That was right, sir, and I shall go after them to-morrow."

"Why do you risk solid gold fetters, as they are?"

"It is merely a fad of mine, sir, that is all."

"We all have our weaknesses, you know."

"Yes, but I have yet to find the weak spot in your make-up," replied the chief, and soon after Dick Doom returned to his own quarters.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HAZEL THE WITCH.

THE home of the woman known as Hazel the Witch was a secluded one, upon a hill against a bluff, and commanding an extensive view, as though the poor creature sought to make up in gazing at the beauties of nature, and the work of man, for the lonely life she led.

Many there were who remembered the woman long years back, yet all said that her hair was white then, when they first knew her, and she had not changed in appearance.

She was considered simply some poor creature, alone and friendless, a crank, yet harmless, for though called a witch, it was only by the superstitious.

Still she could protect herself, and had done so on a number of occasions, until she was feared by those with whom she came in contact, and the negroes looked upon her with awe and hatred.

Her home was a stout old stone hut, with flowers growing about it, a bit of lawn and an air of comfort, for she was not poor.

All she got she paid the ready cash for, and many a poor family had her to thank for a Christmas dinner or some gift.

It was to this little house on the hill that Dick Doom made his way, on the morning after his visit to the chief, in the disguise of a messenger-boy.

The woman saw him coming, and at once recognized her brave rescuer.

A strange look passed over her dark face as she said:

"Appearances are deceitful, for I would have said that he was a brainless dude, from his looks."

"But he saved my life and he, for one, shall be welcome here in my home, such as it is."

"Not that I care for life, ch no!"

"I would have been willing to go long years ago; but then my mission must be fulfilled, I must see him master of yonder house, or else what good has been done by all the crimes to accomplish it."

"Yet is it crime to avenge, to punish the wicked?"

"But yonder youth is welcome here."

She met Dick Doom at the little gate as she saw him near it, and said in a voice that was not harsh, as was its wont:

"Well, my brave young man, you have found out the home of Hazel the Witch, I see?"

"Yes, madam, I came to ask how you were, and to see if you had really suffered much injury at the hands of those villains."

"You are kind to come and ask how an old woman is, and more, you were brave to risk your life to save mine."

"No, I have not suffered from the attack, more than from the blows on my head."

"I have your manacles for you here."

"Thank you, for keeping them for me," and Dick Doom was taking in the woman and her surroundings, though not appearing to do so.

"These would indicate that you are an officer of the law," she said, handing him the Golden Fetters which she had brought from her house.

"They indicate that I seek one whom I have long sought, whom I live in the hopes of finding."

"Some day he will cross my path and then I shall be ready to place these fetters upon him," and Dick Doom spoke with a sudden intensity of feeling that caused the woman to remark quickly:

"Then you too are an avenger, as I am?"

"Yes, I seek to avenge a wrong done, and some day I will do so."

"I live, I train my life to that end," and again Dick Doom spoke with deep feeling.

The woman's face flushed, her eyes brightened and she replied, as she extended her hand:

"Then we are kindred spirits, young man, for I too am a Nemesis."

"See! gaze upon this face, this miniature set in gold, studded with gems, a rare piece of work and of great value, and tell me if in it you recognize one feature of the woman now before you?"

She handed to him as she spoke a miniature set in a solid gold frame, the edge fringed with pearls and diamonds.

It was of a young and beautiful maiden of perhaps nineteen, with a wealth of golden hair, and large deep-blue eyes, a face to see and love.

It had been hung about her neck with a gold chain, and she had taken it off to show Dick Doom.

"And this is yourself?" he asked, at the same time trying to read, without appearing to do so, what he saw engraved on the back of the miniature.

"It was once the woman you see before you, but when she was a happy young girl."

"Look at the wreck which heart-ache and misery have made me, for to-day I am an old hag."

"See! here is another face, a miniature of one I loved, a brave, noble youth he was, who, accursed by a secret of a buried treasure, of vast fortune, was cruelly sacrificed by those he deemed his truest friends."

"See! was he not a noble youth?" and she took from her bosom another miniature, also held about her neck by a gold chain, and handed it to Dick Doom.

The detective gazed upon this miniature also with deep interest, but said simply:

"Truly a noble face, one to revere and love, as is also this one of yourself, for I see that it is your likeness."

"And ah! how I loved him!"

"Yes, he was my idol, and I lost him."

"But I have been avenged, yes, cruelly avenged," she said almost savagely.

"No, no, not yet, not yet; but soon I will be, yes I will be when I see our master of yonder home with its bitter memories, yonder home under whose shadow you saved my life, for it has a master and he must soon claim all, for he has earned it by the work of his good right arm."

"But I am a fool to talk thus! I am an old fool, sir, and I will say no more, no more," and she relapsed into silence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LOST HEIRESS.

THE detective made Hazel the Witch a very long visit, and she found him a most delightful companion.

He only hinted of his past life, and yet he seemed to feel that he was telling her a great deal.

She too, contrary to her usual custom, became communicative, and when at last Dick Doom left, promising to call again, there was a very satisfied look upon his face.

He went to his own quarters, and some two hours after the chief received word that an old gentleman wished to see him, and it was important, Burke said, as he was a Grand Army man who had been robbed of his pension.

The chief was always considerate toward the defenders of the Union, for, a soldier in the

war himself, he could not forget his old comrades.

So the Grand Army man was admitted.

He was a spry old gentleman, evidently one of the old school style, for he wore a blue coat, brass buttons, a white hat, snowy vest with fob chain and seal.

He wore spectacles and his hair was long and white, his face clean shaven and he carried a gold-headed cane.

"Be seated, sir, and let me hear of your misfortune," said the chief.

"Say rather *fortune*, Chief McOmber, for I have struck it rich."

The voice caused the chief to start and he cried:

"Dick Doom, you would deceive Satan."

"I hope to," was the laconic reply.

Then Dick Doom said:

"Chief, I am on the right track and no mistake."

"Did you find out for me, as I wrote and asked you to do, anything about Miss Celia Westmoreland, the writer of that letter I found in Mainhall's desk?"

The chief took a slip of paper from his desk and read aloud:

"Miss Celia Westmoreland belonged to a prominent old Maryland family upon the members of which hung a cloud, through the wild life of an only son."

"The secret acts of this son were made known, and the family was wrecked, for the mother died of a broken heart, the father committed suicide and the sister of the young man, who it seems was hanged, disappeared most mysteriously."

"She was an heiress, but never claimed her fortune, and no one knows what became of her."

"This was Celia Westmoreland, the writer of the letter you have, Dick Doom," said the chief, after finishing his reading of the slip of paper.

"Well I can tell you about her," Dick Doom remarked.

"You?"

"Yes, for she is none other now than Hazel the Witch."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"Explain, Doom, for you have made quite a discovery."

"But then it is just what I expected of you."

"Well, chief, I went to see Hazel the Witch, and she greeted me cordially."

"I played the avenging Nemesis myself, won her sympathy and confidence, and she told me that she too was an avenger."

"Then she showed me a miniature likeness of herself, set in gold and studded with gems."

"I recognized it at once as the counterpart of the old portrait that hangs in the Beacon Hill Mansion, and I managed to read the engraving on the back."

"It was:

"FROM C. W. TO A. M."

"The date was the same as that of the letter."

"Now you are unraveling the mystery, Doom."

"I was also shown the miniature likeness of Arnold Mainhall."

"It too was the counterpart of the full length portrait of him in the Beacon Hill library, and upon it was engraven:

"TO MY IDOL."

"I drew the old woman out all I could and the result was startling."

"She little dreamt that I knew aught of the murders, or of the history of Beacon Hill, for I told her that I was from New Orleans, spending a few days in the city."

"And she trusted you?"

"Perfectly."

"It seemed like a crime to make the old woman tell upon herself, but then there has been crime committed and it must be put a stop to."

"She told me of her wrongs, never once speaking of this as her home, but leading me to believe that she lived far from here."

"She told me of her secret marriage to her lover, and then of the foul plotting of one who had been that lover's friend."

"As she told the story, her lover came of an old and rich family, and had inherited a grand home."

"He had lived there alone with his servants, and had as boon companions a French exile, formerly an officer in the army of France."

"He had also another friend in an American Army officer, and last the man who had brought ruin upon him."

"Then there was an old and faithful negro servant, and he was wont to wait upon his master and his friends."

"These friends came to the house to play cards, and they had lost large sums to their host, when one night he told them of a discovery his negro servant had made in the cellar of the old mansion."

"It was of a secret hiding-place in the wall, and in it was a very large sum of money."

"It was a fatal secret to disclose, for these supposed friends laid a plot, and it was to get possession of this gold and their host's property as well."

"A young lawyer, the friend of the arch plotter, was let into the secret on shares, and one night a quarrel occurred in the house."

"The main plotter wished to marry an heiress and a beauty, whom he believed to be loved by this young man they plotted against."

"So a quarrel followed, a duel was fought, and their victim lost his life."

"The sword he fought with had been filed nearly in two, for he was a superb workman, and so it was a murder, the old woman said."

"In the plot were the two seconds, the officers of the French and American Armies, and the lawyer, all led by the arch plotter, the rival."

"The negro body-servant, between fright and bribery, was made to keep quiet, and the treasure found in the cellar was divided among the plotters, the negro getting his share."

"Hardly had the duel ended, when a form appeared in the room."

"It was the secret wife of the dead man, and in her despair she cursed them all, praying for eternal damnation upon all of them."

"Then she fainted and was carried to her home."

"That woman was Celia Westmoreland," said the detective, impressively.

CHAPTER XXX.

A WIFE'S REVENGE.

THE chief had listened with absorbing interest to the story of Dick Doom, and said softly:

"Poor woman!"

"Yes, but mark her revenge."

"She did not tell that she was recently the wife of the dead man, but pretended to have come there in search of the arch plotter, to beg him to save her family from disgrace, through the acts of her brother."

"She was taken to her home by this man, the funeral of the dead man followed, and then the lawyer came out with his papers and proved who owned the estate."

"Now I need not tell you, chief, that these plotters were Lawyer Austin Brent, Major Marcus Mayo, Pierre D'Arville, the old negro Abe, the Black Hermit, and the leader of them was Ford Vaughan, alias Prevost Bassford."

"No, I guessed that."

"Miss Celia Westmoreland was taken to her home, and there remained in seclusion for a year or more."

"Vaughan divided the treasure and yet held full claim to the homes of his co-conspirators."

"Then he disappeared, and wreck fell upon the Westmoreland family through his betraying the evil deeds of the son."

"But, for all that he had the temerity, several years after, to seek Celia Westmoreland and ask her to be his wife, for he seemed infatuated with her, and he never knew that she had been secretly married to poor Arnold Mainhall."

"She accepted him and they were married."

"That was the beginning of her revenge."

"The issue of this marriage was a son."

"When the child was a year old the mother fled with it from her home."

"In vain did Ford Vaughan seek for them for years."

"At last he gave up the search, believing that they had died, that the woman had taken her own and her child's life."

"Under an assumed name he came to the home he claimed, Beacon Hill Mansion, and dwelt in the very house where he had treacherously murdered Mainhall."

"You have woven a complete web, Dick Doom."

"I have gotten at the bottom facts from the thorough search I have made of all those houses, and by putting the threads together have woven a rope which will hang some one," was the reply.

"And the woman?"

"Ten years after her flight from Vaughan, she returned to the scenes of her girlhood."

"Her hair had become as white as snow, and dwelling in a far Southern land had bronzed her face, so that no one knew her."

"And her son?"

"Ah! that tells the story of a woman's cruel revenge, for she educated that boy with one motive in life, to avenge."

"He was told that he had five lives to take, and they must die by a knife in his hand, and a sixth blade must be kept for his heart should he be detected and fail."

"When he had avenged the wrongs of the past, then he should become rich and live a life of luxury."

"He should dwell in an old house, and other homes should be his, while he should have two fortunes to squander, if so he willed."

"But he was educated to kill, and well was he taught."

"At last his victims were pointed out to him, five men, grown old and yet living lives of luxury, though deeply feeling the crimes they had committed."

"And all of them, the old negro included, living on the gold they had signed to get possession of."

"In various disguises this avenger went to look over the field of his red work."

"Then he began it, and you know the result."

"The five murders, which have so mystified me?"

"Yes."

"And the murderer?"

"Is a handsome, dashing man of thirty, dwelling in bachelor quarters, living in luxury, and only waiting for his mother, Hazel the Witch, to place in his hand the promised fortune, for he has done his work, and done it well."

"Who is this man, Dick Doom?"

"I saw his photograph, for the old woman showed it to me and told me it was her son."

"I had seen the man before, half a dozen times, and recognized him at once."

"I went on the track to find him out, and saw him going up to the home of his mother."

"Then I knew that there was no mistake."

"I ran to my quarters, changed my disguise, and when he came away from the cabin, I shadowed him."

"To his home?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I wrote him a note, signing a girl's name, and stating that I would call upon him to-night upon a matter of vital importance to him."

"He responded, making the appointment for eight o'clock."

"And you will go?"

"Yes, as Miss Ringwood, and you will go with me, I know."

"Openly?"

"Yes, in disguise, but as one I have brought, I will tell him, as a witness to our meeting."

"Good!"

"But the old woman?"

"I pity her, but she has shown herself a fiend and must be placed where she can do no harm, on some charge that must be found against her, for it is best not to bring her into this affair."

"A search of his room will reveal Knife Number Six, I am sure, and criminate him in many ways."

"If it cannot be accomplished otherwise, then of course the witch must be brought in, with all she said to me; but you know I never appear as Dick Doom in acting as a witness and in prosecuting my cases."

"You know best, Doom."

"But I congratulate you upon having accomplished the most marvelous piece of Secret Service work I ever knew of."

"You have solved this whole murder mystery, and I only wish we could make known your work to the public."

"No, no, that must not be, for I am a secret worker, only, you know, chief," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NEMESIS.

MR. WEST MORELAND, a young man about town, a suspected sport and of elegant appearance, handsome, suave and cynical, sat in his pleasant quarters in the upper part of the city enjoying a cigar and waiting for a visitor.

He lived in fine style, alone, save for his valet, taking his meals at a fashionable hotel.

He appeared to be a man of thirty, dressed well, drove a good pair of horses, and rode a good animal as well.

He was a man to command attention anywhere, courtly, refined and elegant, and in spite of his cynicism, was a favorite at the clubs to which he belonged, though, for some

reason they could not exactly account for, his intimates stood in certain awe of him.

He was known to have no marked vices, though at times he would play cards, and when doing so was almost invariably a winner.

Now as he sat in his elegantly furnished rooms he seemed to be in a musing mood, for he was lost in thought and from time to time would mutter to himself aloud.

Suddenly he sprung to his feet and began to pace to and fro, his hands clasped behind his back.

At times his handsome face grew clouded with the thoughts that flashed through his mind, and then again a smile was visible upon his mouth, but it was rather a bitter smile than a pleasant one.

At last, as though unconscious that he was doing so, he began to think aloud, as he paced slowly up and down the room.

And this is the way his soliloquy ran:

"Well, the end is accomplished, and the reward is at hand, I suppose."

"What I am, what I have [been, Heaven only knows!]

"I believe that it was my nature to have led a different life, for I am not cruel-hearted or grasping, or would not have been had I not been educated up to such an existence."

"How strange it is that one can be educated up to having no conscience!"

"I would that it had been otherwise; and yet, I have been brought up with an object in view, and that is revenge."

"It seems that I was born to become a Nemesis, and most completely was I educated to that purpose."

"Yes, I have been made to do that which I feel under other circumstances my inmost soul would have rebelled against."

"And what is it that I have done?"

"Avenged one long in his grave."

"I have made graves in the world that the soul of one who was most basely slain might rest in peace."

"I have not shrunk from my cruel fate—I have done as I was told to do, reared to do, and have now completed the fatal list, and what enjoyment there is in life which gold can give I suppose I will now reap."

"But, will not the specters that I have made haunt me through life?"

"Will not memories of red deeds come before me in all their bitterness, driving pleasure out of life and causing me to feel and suffer the agonies of a reproving soul?"

"It must be so, and I feel that it will, in spite of my weird rearing to avenge a death with the lives of others."

"I begin to feel, now that the end is reached, that there will be phantoms from the graveyard for me to fight off, shadowy white forms which can be seen in the darkest night, grim specters that will haunt my dreams."

"I have not flinched from the work I have been told I was born to accomplish, which I was reared to do."

"But now that it is done, now that the avenger is satiated, I begin to feel that this hand of mine can never have washed from it the red stain which it has been bathed in."

"And if the hand bears the stain how much deeper is it in the heart, how it is branded upon the brain."

"Bah! I am allowing myself to become a coward at this late day."

"Yes, and when I have never feared the real, never held back when the deed was to be done."

"But here I am flinching now from the unreal, the phantoms, and dreading the future."

"This must not be, oh, no!"

"I must live to enjoy what I have sinned to obtain."

"There must be no repentance from me at this late day, no dreading to meet in dream-land what I feared not to make, grim, haunting specters."

"Had I committed murder in anger, under the influence of passion, then might I have forgiven myself the deed."

"But to do what I have done in the calm deliberation of calculation, of intention, I fear I cannot drive out of heart and brain the thought that I deserve to be a haunted man through life."

"Ah, me! how moody I am getting, so I will turn to pleasanter thoughts, or I'll become a horror even to myself."

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO VISITORS.

WITH an effort of his powerful will, West Moreland threw off the attack of the "blues"

that was upon him, and dropping into an easy-chair he took up a letter from the table and glanced over it.

"Now who is the correspondent who seeks an interview with me here to-night at my house?"

"I granted it of course, for I can refuse nothing to a woman."

"It is about the time, too, when she said she would be here."

"Well, I am ready to receive her, be she who or what she may."

"How strange that with my real hatred of men I respect and love woman."

"Even the old and decrepit I love among women, and the young and the beautiful lure me toward them in a way that I cannot comprehend, especially when my life has been made what it is by the teachings of a woman."

"But I am beginning to get moody again, so must not let my thoughts run riot any more, at least not to-night."

"I will think who this fair visitor can be, and get interested in her coming."

"Ah! there is the bell now."

He arose and walked to a rear room, where his valet was.

"There is the bell, Jeans, so show my visitor in; then you can go for the night," he said to his valet.

The man obeyed—only there were two visitors instead of one—a young lady and a stout man, who had the appearance of being a farmer.

"Mr. Moreland, you do not know me other than as Miss Ringwood; but I have come to see you upon a most important matter, and this gentleman, Mr. Mack, will witness what takes place between us," said the young lady.

Mr. Moreland bowed in silence and placed seats for his visitors.

But Miss Ringwood remained standing, while her companion moved to one side of Moreland, and seemed deeply interested in his surroundings.

"I wished to say, Mr. Moreland," went on the young girl in the same sweet tone and manner:

"That I have been upon a voyage of discovery—have visited, in fact, some old homes, one Beacon Hill Mansion; another the home of Uncle Abe, the Black Hermit; a third, the country seat of Major Marcus Mayo; then the city mansion of the late Austin Brent; and last, the plantation of D'Arville, the French exile."

"In each of these homes I obtained souvenirs of your work, most cleverly done—See, these Nemesis knives, five of them, and I have come to you for the sixth."

The man had listened with wonder; had started, turned pale, then became pallid as a corpse and trembled violently, while he dropped helplessly into his chair, from which he had risen on their entrance, staring wildly at his accuser; but as he uttered no word, Dick Doom—as he is now known to be—went on to say:

"I accuse you of being five times a cold-blooded murderer, West Moreland, and I have the proofs to send you to the gallows for your crimes."

"And now I arrest you, sir, upon the charge of being a quintuple murderer, and the Secret Service chief placed a pistol to the head of the accused man, while, quick as a flash, Dick Doom slipped upon his wrists the Golden Fetters he always carried with him!"

The accused man had so far not uttered a word, since his greeting of his visitors.

He stood like one who was dazed by a severe blow upon the head.

Had his moody musings before the coming of his visitors been a foreboding of his fate?

Did his brain and heart anticipate what was to be?

It would seem so, for he was not a man of moods, not one to dread the future and repine over his acts of the past.

And here, before him, stood a young girl, apparently, who was his accuser, and with her was one who looked like a mere countryman.

How deftly had "Miss Ringwood" told her story, of her visiting the old homes about the City of Washington!

He had been awed into listening to her, and without the shadow of a suspicion that he was suspected, it had not occurred to him that he would ever be found out.

So he had dropped down into his chair like one whose strength of mind and body had left him.

He could but glare at his captors until, at last, he had found his voice and asked, but in a low, barely audible tone:

"Who and what are you?"

"This gentleman is Chief McOmber of the

United States Secret Service, Mr. Moreland," replied Dick Doom.

"And you?"

"Who are you?"

"I am known as the Ferret of the Golden Fetters!"

"Your name?"

"That does not matter."

"What did you say I was accused of?"

"Of murder."

"Who was my victim, did you say?"

"Your *vi tims* have been five."

"Indeed? And pray who were they?" and the cynical manner of the accused man began to return to him.

Once more he began to be master of himself.

"I accuse you of murdering Major Marcus Mayo."

"Oae!" and the accused man spoke with the utmost coolness.

"Go on."

"Pierre D'Arville."

"Two!"

"Austin Brent."

"Three!"

"Old Abe, known as the Black Hermit."

"Four!"

And then West Moreland added with a smile:

"Now the fifth, please."

"Ford Vaughan."

"Five!"

"Yes, and I have all the proof to hang you."

"You have done excellent detective work, indeed, to have *proof* that will hang me," and the prisoner spoke with a sneer, while there was a light in his eyes that looked dangerous.

Seeing this, Dick Doom said quickly:

"Beware, for no act of yours, now, will cause me to shoot you and thus cheat the gallows of well-deserved prey, and I warn you that you will only cause yourself more trouble if you resist."

"What makes you think I will resist?"

"I saw in your eyes that you intended some desperate act."

"You read well."

"I am glad to see that you think better of it now. Come; you must go with us."

The man submitted in calm silence, and, an hour after, was an inmate of a cell in the city prison.

Meanwhile Chief McOmber, at the request of Dick Doom, who did not wish her to know him in the matter, had gone to the home of Hazel the Witch, to arrest her as an accomplice and learn all he could to condemn her son.

But, standing in the shadow of some foliage, having gone there to see her son, was the woman herself, and, through the windows she had seen and heard all.

Like a deer she fled from the scene back to her cabin, and after but a short stay there she departed, carrying with her a large bundle.

Down to the river she rapidly walked, leaped into her boat, set the tiny sail and went flying down the Potomac.

As the lights of the city grew dim astern she turned and looked back.

Shaking her fist at the city she cried:

"Farewell forever! for I go never to return."

"You may hang him if you will, for I have had my revenge. He is Ford Vaughan's son, his heir—the heir of the man I loved and have avenged; but, let him hang, for I have never loved him. No! no! As Ford Vaughan's son I have hated him; so let him hang, while I go my way alone in life!"

She continued on her way down the river in the darkness, leaving behind her the scenes of her sorrows and sufferings, and to his fate her own son, the son she had reared to avenge the death of Arnold Mainhall at the hands of Ford Vaughan and his confederates in crime.

That son she had never loved, as he was the child of the man whom she so bitterly hated, the man whom she had devoted her life, her gold and her energies to have meet his doom by the hand of his own son, whom the reader now knows as West Moreland, whose crimes had at last found him out, and who had been tracked down by Dick Doom the Ferret of the Golden Fetters.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

WEST MORELAND the Nemesis was never hanged, for he took poison which he always carried with him and thus ended his own life, dying in a cell of the city prison.

He left a confession that he had taken the lives of the five men so mysteriously murdered, and his motive had been to get their fortunes in the

end, as he knew they had no heirs, while also he had a wrong to avenge in killing them.

More he did not say, but that was enough to prove that Dick Doom had shadowed the right man to the bitter end.

As for Hazel the Witch, the woman who had loved and lost, and had so suffered through life, she made a will leaving to charity all her wealth, and proving conclusively that she was the rightful claimant of the Beacon Hill estate, and the property of the murdered man, who had bought their houses with the gold they had taken from Arnold Mainhall.

Having done this act to atone for the past, the woman disappeared and it was said went into a life of utter seclusion for the remainder of her weary life.

Dick Doom still lives and does secret work, and is known to those who come in contact with him as the Ferret of the Golden Fetters, a man whose own life is a mystery, yet one who solves every mystery of life and crime which he undertakes, one who has shadowed many a murderer to the gallows, sent many a criminal to dwell under the black shadows of a prison.

THE END.

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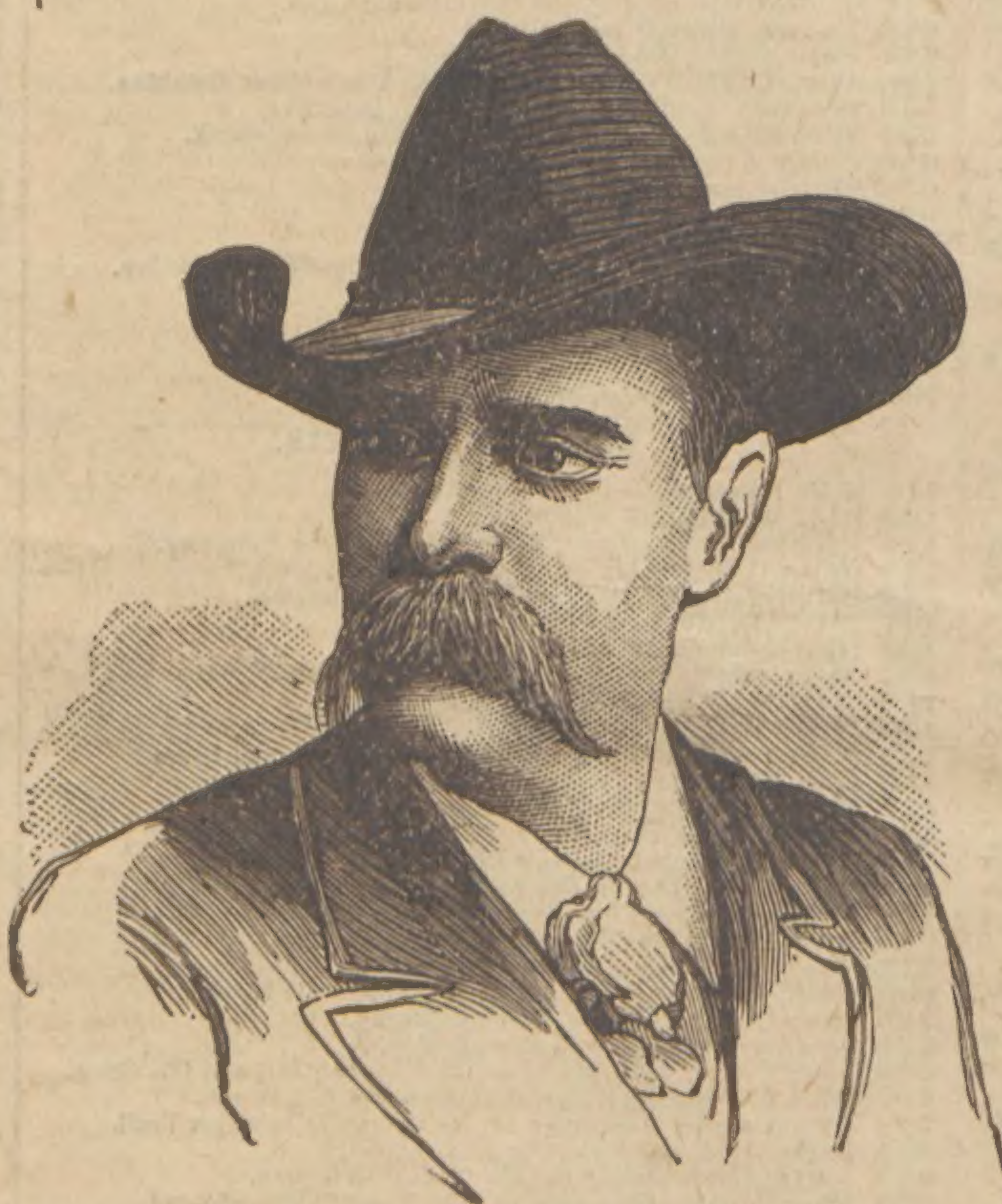
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